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ELISABETH CAVAZZA

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THE RETURN OF ULYSSES

DON FINIMONDONE

Calabrian Sketches

BY

ELISABETH CAVAZZA

New York
CHARLES L. WEBSTER & CO.
1892

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EDITOR'S NOTE

MR. HOPKINSON SMITH—author, artist, and architect—in his delightful *Day at Laguerre's and Other Days*, preaches a noteworthy parable to American travelers, among whom, indeed, he himself is preëminent. For he reminds them that while they are searching foreign lands for the artistic and unusual, a charming bit of France, at least, may be found at their very doors, within a brief walk of Manhattan Island. No doubt the comparison could be carried much further, and with advantage to the tourists who know so little of their native land.

So, while a multitude of readers and those who supply their needs are ransacking Europe for literary novelties—while French, Russian, Norwegian, Spanish, Polish, and even Dutch writers are in turn raised on pedestals to engage the public attention—it is not surprising that some of our own writers who have depicted foreign life should be for the moment overlooked.

At the mention of life in Italy, the names of Hawthorne, Marion Crawford, and Henry Fuller come to mind. They, however, have been most successful in their portrayal of the upper classes. To enter into the

very soul of the Calabrian peasant, to see as he sees, to think as he thinks, and withal to capture the true romance of his condition—these privileges have fallen to the share of the lady whose stories are here given.

A native and resident of Portland, Maine, and belonging to an old New England family, Mrs. Cavazza early became interested in Italian life and letters; an interest undoubtedly increased by her marriage. It is now several years since *A Calabrian Penelope* first made its appearance in *The New Princeton Review*. Readers of that periodical were quick to catch the new note in our literature, and it is not too much to say that their anticipations have been fulfilled.

A dainty little patrician sketch has been added to the volume by way of contrast with these pictures of Italian life among the lowly.

Acknowledgment is due Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., for kind permission to reprint "A Trumpet Call" from "The Atlantic Monthly."

TO

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

IN TOKEN OF

GRATITUDE AND AFFECTIONATE

RESPECT

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CALABRIAN SKETCHES

CALABRIAN SKETCHES

DON FINIMONDONE

THE *comare* cleaned with her apron a place on the doorstep, so that the signora, who came from so far away, could sit down without soiling her dress. Then "With permission," said she, and sat down herself, to tell the story of Don Finimondone.

It is an ugly thing to keep Lent twelve months in the year; but when the olives are scarce, and the sheep, because of the drought that burns up the pastures, are reduced so that they are a pity to see, and the earth cracks between the blades of buckwheat, it is a bad prospect for the next carnival. So they found it, when the winter was over, and in the village they began to think of the coming carnival time. It was not a great city—anything but that—yet it was a town like another, with a

H Y P L

church and a priest and a mayor and a *piazzetta*, and an honest people that were not heathen, and wanted a little carnival in honor of their blessed faith.

At the inn, every evening, there gathered a group of *massari*, *massarotti*, the greater and the less, to arrange the ways and means for the celebration of the carnival. In the great cities, where they waste money by the shovelful, they have not to spoil their brains with thinking of every *lira* that is spent. The committee talked like so many windmills; and those of them who had been to the cities had the best of it, for they could say what they had seen there. But all could speak with reason of the hard times and the bad year, and say that little could be done.

It might have been that nothing was done but for *compare* Vincenzo, the son of an old *massaro* who was reputed rich for those parts, for he had fields, and a house and a stable, and sheep and poultry, and some *cafisi* of oil that came from the *oliveto*, where at noon the trees made it almost as dark as it is at *Ave*

Maria in autumn. No one could say that they had ever seen him spend two *tarì* at once without making wry faces, as if they had pulled so many of his teeth. There was only one thing of which he was prodigal, and that was predictions of evil. He was never content; he would say his say about everything, and never finished talking; he would dispute about the shadow of a donkey. His family led a sorry life, and more than once his wife wished herself dead.

Everything, according to him, was going to the bad. Did it rain, there would be another flood for the sins of the world, and that without the ark to put two beasts in. Did the sun shine, the grass was burning up, and the geese would die with their mouths open for thirst. If the olives were scarce, there would not be enough oil to fry the good things of heaven; and if it were a good year, he said that it was a pity to see the branches loaded till they broke, and olives so cheap that it was indeed ruin, it was.

From his habit of foretelling the ruin of everything, he had gained the name of Don

Finimondone; and it is not certain that he would not have had some satisfaction to see the world come to an end, provided he could have the opportunity to say to the mayor and people of the village, "I always told you so!" And since the sun shone and the rain fell in their accustomed measure, year after year, Don Finimondone became more and more discontented with the earth and the heavens. If he had been there when the world was made, it would have been a different thing!

His son, Vincenzo, was of quite another stuff; he was all his mother, good soul, that sang when she worked, and listened when her husband scolded, as if he were counting so many beads of the rosary, and when he beat her she only said, "Better the hand than the stick."

If Vincenzo had only had his father's money to spend there would have been a carnival worth seeing! But Vincenzo was a blacksmith, and, though he had a house and a forge, and four furrows under the sun to sow beans and some handfuls of maize and buckwheat, he had no more than was needed to keep his

wife and children. Every year there was another baby; and while the grandmother said, "Another soul gained for Paradise," the grandfather grumbled, "Another mouth to eat, and poverty enough for ten." But Vincenzo and Mariangela and the children throve and were happy. Cola, the biggest boy, could already blow the bellows while his father beat the hot iron; the mother, with the baby on her back and the little ones hanging to her skirts or running beside her, sowed the field and pulled up the weeds that were choking the buckwheat; or, if it were winter, spun and wove the cloth to make the garments of the family.

When the carnival was at hand Vincenzo had had greater expenses than usual, for his mule had died when the days were shortest, and the earth was frozen, so that it was hard to dig the hole to bury the poor beast. Some weeks later Vincenzo had bought a new mule, a fine bay; and in honor of this animal had painted his cart a bright blue, with Sant' Antonio, that preached to the fishes, the large, the middle-sized, and the small, upon one side;

and upon the other were represented the souls in purgatory. There was not a finer cart, one might wager, not even in Messina, where they make such beautiful ones; and when Vincenzo had given the last touch to the red and yellow flames, it seemed that one might warm his hands at them. And the parish priest, Don Giuseppe, was so pleased with the appearance of the cart that he said, when the images of the blessed saints in the church should need a new coat of paint, Vincenzo should give it to them.

The first thing needful for a carnival procession is at least one cart, for the masks to ride in, and Vincenzo offered his for that purpose. They would also have had another cart, and have trimmed it with green cloth and cotton-wool to represent the waves and the foam of the sea, with three sirens to sit and sing in it, that were the daughters of compare Mariano, the sacristan—handsome figures of girls, with long, long hair—while the blue cart, with a mast and a sail in it, should carry the little monk that stopped his ears with cotton-wool and tied himself with his rope girdle to the

mast, and, blessed be the saints! was deaf as a bell for all that the sirens sang so loud, and so was saved. But Don Giuseppe, the priest, said that it was not a monk, but, on the contrary, a pagan; and that they could not have the daughters of the *sagrestano*, and still less his cart, that carried people to the *camposanto*, for sirens are only a profane fable.

Finally it was decided to have only Vincenzo's cart and the bay mule; and, because this would cost nothing or little, the committee should wear false heads made of pumpkins, with holes for eyes and mouth and nostrils, and they should ride in the blue cart between the pious fishes and the souls of purgatory.

The day before the carnival was to begin there were great doings at the forge. Vincenzo was shaping a new set of shoes for the bay mule, and compare Carmenio, who was also of the committee of the carnival, blew the bellows until the hot iron was red as coral. The others of the committee sat in the doorway, over which were nailed a horseshoe and two pieces of thin iron bent in the form of a pair

of horns, and between them, written with charcoal, were the figures 8 and 9, so that if the witches should come—may they be far from us!—they could not cross the threshold. Don Finimondone came along the road, from the sheepfold, and stopped to look at the bay mule, that was tied by the halter near the door of the forge.

"Is not that a fine mule that your son bought at the fair?" said compare Carmenio. "Look what legs; and he will draw double the load of the other one."

"Say *fora-fascino* and *benedica!*" cried Vincenzo, for fear of the evil eye.

But compare Carmenio did not hear him, as he walked up the road with Don Finimondone, to whom he paid great court, because he wished to marry the daughter, Filomena, that had great black eyes, and a mattress, and a box of linen that she had spun and woven for herself, besides the little dowry that her father would give to her.

Whether it was the witches that put a hand in, despite the horseshoe over the door, or

whether it was the unlucky praises spoken by compare Carmenio, with one thought for the mule and ten for Filomena, who can say? But the fact is, that when Vincenzo stooped to lift up the hind foot of the mule to shoe him, the beast put him in one of those kicks of which two would leave nothing for the doctor to do, only for the priest. Vincenzo cried out that the mule had broken his bones, and he fell to the ground like a fig-tree under the axe. The men took him up gently and carried him home on their arms, while little Cola ran on before to tell his mamma that the bad mule had killed poor papa. Mariangela came to the door with the great tears running down her face, that was white as a washed rag. "My man! they have killed my man!" she screamed.

Behind her came the mother, *zia* Agnese, with the corners of the handkerchief on her head trembling as if she had the fever. Vincenzo said that he was anything but dead—though not all the neighbors believed that he spoke truly. Then they took him into the

house, laid him upon the bed, and sent for the doctor.

"But even the doctors do not know everything; and for all that they write who knows what words on a scrap of paper, and the apothecary reads it, and then puts a little of this and of that into a phial that you pay for like the best wine, when the witches or the evil eye come into the affair," said Mariangela, "there is more than the *signor dottore* that is wanted."

So she put a little water and salt in a dish, and dipped her finger in it, and made three crosses on her husband's forehead, and said *otto nove* and *benedica*, to draw out the evil eye, as if it had been a nail that was stuck into his foot; and poor Vincenzo said he already felt better.

"For it was all my fault," observed Mariangela; "stupid that I am, I heedlessly swept the house last evening, so as to have everything ready for the carnival, and forgot to lay the broom across the doorway."

Whoever sweeps at night steals the horse of

a witch, for—as every one knows—they ride on broomsticks, and those that lack the broomstick have to walk, and are too late to dance the *ridda*, which makes them angry.

Filomena, who had heard of the misfortune, came in from the field; and taking the new red tassels which she had made for the mule, to keep him from the evil eye, she threw them out of the door and said, "May the devil come to take his own mule!"

Don Finimondone sat upon a bench by the hearth, with his elbows resting on his knees, his shoulders drawn up to his ears, and his chin between his palms.

"I said that the bay mule would play some ugly trick," he repeated.

The doctor came, and said that for three broken ribs one must have patience; and he wrote in his pocket-book so fast it was a pleasure to see the words crawl like flies over the paper, and then he tore out the page, and Cola ran with it to the apothecary.

And who would believe it! it was not the pain of the broken bones that most troubled

Vincenzo; it was the thought of the carnival that gnawed his mind and gave him no peace. He turned this way and that, as if the bed were full of thorns, and although, as luck willed it, a sheep had died the night before, so that his mother could make him some broth, he would eat nothing for all that she begged him, "My little heart, eat two spoonfuls; it will do you good."

The thought of the blue cart and the pumpkin heads tormented him; he had it fixed in his mind, and he ground it over and over like flour. Mariangela offered to put on, herself, the great cloak and the pumpkin head, and go in his place in the cart, to pacify him; but he would not hear of it.

"Oh, why should you go in the cart?" said he. "It is of no use. Moreover, there is witchcraft in the matter, and you would go to break your neck, besides doing an unsuitable thing."

Then Vincenzo would have wished that compare Carmenio should go in the blue cart and take his place as leader of the carnival. But

Don Finimondone said that it should not be so; it was enough that the mule had spoiled his son for the holidays, without ruining the cart and breaking the bones of any other Christians, and neither mule nor cart should go out of the stable the next day. Vincenzo could not content himself, and Mariangela cried, and Filomena scolded, and *zia* Agnese, poor old woman, did not know to which saint to make her vows, for trouble of mind. And Don Finimondone went into the stable, with ever so long a face and in the worst of humors; and he drew the cart into its place, and tied the mule by the halter to the stall, and locked the stable door upon the inside, and passed the night in the hayloft. "With women and geese there is no peace," observed Don Finimondone.

At sunrise the next morning, which was the first day of the carnival, compare Carmenio betook himself to the house of Don Finimondone to ask for news of his friend Vincenzo. Filomena came down the dooryard with a stick in her hand, to drive the geese to the pasture, that was little better than stubble.

"Good-day, comare Filomena," said Carmenio; "you are up early to help the sun to light the world."

"It is because I must take these little beasts to the pasture that I am here to have the pleasure of seeing you, compare Carmenio," she replied.

"If I were a great gentleman, comare Filomena," went on Carmenio, "you should know nothing of geese but the feathers in cushions. You should have a silk dress for every day in the week, and a pair of gold ear-rings. Meanwhile, here is a handkerchief that I bought for you at the fair."

Filomena took the scarlet handkerchief and knotted it around her neck.

"So many thanks, compare Carmenio," said she; "it is a consolation to have those who care for us."

"And if you have more than one who cares for you," observed compare Carmenio, "it is true that I shall split his head as if it were wood. If there is another that you prefer to me, say so quickly and I will go away. If not,

I love you from my soul, as I have said, and as I will say before the priest."

"There is no one else, no, compare Carmenio," she answered; "and I have my box of linen, and a mattress, and some pennies of dowry."

The soft little rings of black hair curled around Filomena's ears, and her coral ear-rings were so red that compare Carmenio could not contain himself; he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and kissed Filomena under the ear. She became as red as the coral ear-rings, and said:

"We do wrong to think of such things when my brother is in so bad a state."

Carmenio also became very serious at once. "Tell me, how is Vincenzo?" he asked.

"Badly, badly," replied Filomena. "My sister-in-law says he did not close his eyes all night. The thought of the carnival weighs on his mind like so much lead. 'If it had been a little later,' he complains; 'if that mule would have kept his feet to himself until after the carnival, it would have made me a good penance

for Lent.' Poor thing, there he is kept in bed, and my father makes it worse with his words."

"It has been said that in praising the mule, *benedica*," said Carmenio, "I cast the evil eye on compare Vincenzo. If I believed that, I could never forgive myself for my heedlessness."

"And who says it?" asked Filomena, indignant. "Tell me quickly, for I will scratch his face with my hands for speaking ill of you!"

"It was—saving respect—it was Don Finimondone."

"A-ah!" screamed Filomena, "the spiteful old man! He tells stories too big for the mouth of an oven, and he leads my mamma the life of a soul in purgatory. More than once I have been just ready to put my hands on him, to see my poor, little, old woman cry. And now he speaks ill of you!"

Here Filomena sat down upon the ground, threw her apron over her head, and cried like a fountain.

"See, comare Filomena," said Carmenio, "words are not stones. If we love each other,

when once we are married we can go to another village, and Don Finimondone will no longer come into the matter. I have a few *lire* laid by, to buy the roof and a little piece of land, and there is the black donkey, with her colt, that, when he is grown, will draw me a cart like a horse."

"That is well," answered Filomena, "but take care that my father knows nothing of it. The trouble is, we never can say a little word to each other, like honest people, for my father comes to disturb us, and says that you come buzzing around me like a bee among the buckwheat; and that when the lover talks the spindle is silent; and that you are a simpleton and a good-for-nothing, and that I am a silly thing to let myself be taken with such airs. And now you must go, for I have to attend to my geese."

"Good-bye for now," said Carmenio; "shall you come into the *piazzetta?*"

"Yes," she replied, "I can come there, for my father has shut himself into the stable, and says he will not come out until the foolishness is at an end."

And so the lovers parted; she went about her business and he about his, while the fresh March wind that blows at sunrise lifted the dust of the road like a little cloud.

Carmenio went to the committee of the carnival and told them how Vincenzo was, and that Don Finimondone had said that they should not have the bay mule and the blue cart. Everybody said his say about Don Finimondone, and there was not a dog that gave him a good word.

"Without Vincenzo and the blue cart," said one, "we shall have to do without the good and the best. But so it is, and we must have patience."

Then was heard a noise as of trotting hoofs that came nearer and nearer, and soon there appeared the wicked mule, caparisoned with red cloth, and upon his back there rode a horrid figure, like a man, but with a disproportionate head, over which was wrapped a great black cloak that left to be seen only the long nose of an ugly false-face, and covered the whole body down as far as the knees. The

mule seemed uneasy, as if he carried an evil burden.

"I am come to ride at the head of your procession," said the black man.

The committee were like stone, for fear.

"I was called to come and take my mule, and here I am," he proceeded, in a terrible voice, that seemed as if he had his head in an empty wine-cask.

There was nothing to be done about it—the procession must move. They went through the streets like so many monks, they crossed themselves continually, and dared not speak for dread of the black man, who might be, if not the devil himself, at least a witch, for, as is well known, witches can take whatever shape they please. The whole village was out to see the carnival procession pass; the infirm old people had crawled out like flies in the first warm sunshine of spring; the women held their babies in their arms; the children stood and stared with their fingers in their mouths, or hid their faces in their mammas' skirts for fear of the masks, as they came near. Don

Giuseppe came out of the church, and waited to see the procession.

Pom! pom!—that was the bass-drum, beaten by compare Carmenio, who sat, with the others of the committee, in the cart of the *sagrestano*—for since there were to be no sirens, or other heathen, they were permitted to have the horse and cart that were used to go upon consecrated ground. And in front of them rode the black man upon the bad mule.

Oh! he had an evil tongue that never rested, and it struck everywhere. Whoever had stolen as much as a handful of beans heard of it; and whoever had quarreled with his neighbor got a solemn reprimand for it, as if he were before the judge. To poor old comare Marta, who lived by plain sewing, and whose son was in the prison for shooting a man, such things were said, because she had brought up her boy to commit mortal sin, that the poor creature covered her face with her hands, and ran into her house, all in tears. The black man reproved the *sagrestano* for having stolen a little piece of candle from the altar of the blessed sant'

Antonio, who could very well do without it, to light himself home, one stormy night when there was not a ray of moonlight, and whoever went through the streets risked his neck, it was so dark. The women ran here and there, like hens when the fox is outside the coop, for the black man blamed this one for a bad housewife, and that one for speaking ill of her neighbor, and another for idleness—and there was not a living soul that dared to contradict him. He was like a second conscience —he stuck his nose in everywhere and had no pity.

Finally, he spoke to comare Filomena, who stood with a group of young girls in a corner of the *piazzetta.*

"Ah! even the *civetta* comes to the snare at last, according to the proverb; and for all your pursed-up mouth, and your playing the dead pussy-cat, it is known that you go to the threshing-floor to talk in the evening with Carmenio the carpenter."

Every one looked to see comare Filomena fall and faint away. Anything but faint away!

She knew how to give him bread for his cake, and answered him before all the people:

"Thanks for so many compliments. I am used to such, and worse, for when it is a question of evil speaking my papa can give points to the devil. Go and take lessons of him if you want to know how the thing is done."

The black man had nothing to say. He struck his mule and went off at a gallop, and those who had gotten out of it without blame could laugh at the unlucky ones. Some persons said there was a smell of sulphur in the air, and Don Giuseppe judged it prudent to bless all the people together, to make it quite safe. There was no more sport of any kind, and they all went home.

"It will be at least a little consolation to Vincenzo," observed Carmenio, "that if the *festa* had to end badly, he was not there to see it."

That same evening he went to see his friend Vincenzo, to tell him how things had gone. *Zia* Agnese opened the door for him. "We are unfortunate," she said to him; "my hus-

band would not listen to reason, and this afternoon he came out of the stable, leading the bay mule by the halter, and then he sold him for twenty *lire* less than my son paid for him fifteen days ago."

"That mule eats up money like grain," added Don Finimondone, from the corner of the hearth, where he sat upon a bench; "he has made us lose twenty *lire*, to say nothing of the broken bones and the doctor's bill. A world of trouble, say I."

"It was a sorry sight, the procession," said Carmenio, by way of changing the subject. "Every one was like stone for fear of the witch, except my brave Filomena. Whoever got a reproof swallowed it in holy peace; but Filomena was as shrewd as the devil himself, and gave him an answer that was suited as cheese to macaroni. '*Grazie tante*,' says she—"

"A-ah, the evil tongue that she has in her mouth," interrupted Don Finimondone, "to tell me, before all the people, that I am worse than the devil!"

"You!" they exclaimed in chorus.

"I knew very well that it was my papa," remarked Filomena; "witch or not, there were the very same patches on the knees of his trousers that I sewed with my own hands last Sunday to make him decent to go to hear mass. And if I have talked at the threshing-floor with compare Carmenio, it is because I shall marry him in another month, and in this house one cannot say two words in peace. If you give me my *cassa* of linen and the mattress, I will go away without one *tarì* of dowry."

"And I will take her without anything in her hands," said Carmenio.

"Have you no fear of her tongue?" asked Don Finimondone. "When you bring her back to me and say, 'Take your daughter, for there is no living with her,' I will shut the door in her face, and leave her in the middle of the road."

"He who has a log can have chips," observed Vincenzo, from his bed; "and if my sister knows how to open her mouth upon

occasion, it is because she is the daughter of her father."

"As for me," said *zia* Agnese, "I don't complain of my daughter Filomena; she is a good girl, and sweeps the house for me, and kneads the bread and tends the poultry, and sews and spins with a good will. And with a good man she will be a good wife."

"And I shall be a good man to her, I shall," promised compare Carmenio, and meant what he said.

"When she has the cares of a house," said comare Mariangela, "you will see that she will not talk so much. When hens have to live by scratching they have no time to peck each other, and you will find her good and gentle enough. And you can see, from Vincenzo and me, how two that love each other can live on little and be content."

"And I tell you plainly, once for all," said Carmenio, "that I shall marry your daughter; and if you forbid the marriage I will speak, and let the whole town know that it was you who spoiled the *festa*, so that it was like a

penance—you, that made Lent of our carnival."

And, therefore, rather than have the story told to all the people, Don Finimondone consented that Filomena should marry compare Carmenio, and even gave him the dowry, so many heads of the king, counted into his hands.

"You will repent your marriage, compare Carmenio, you will repent it," prophesied Don Finimondone, "but you will still have the consolation of the money."

. . . . . .

"And were they happy together, Filomena and Carmenio?" asked the signora.

"Oh! *cara signora*, who can tell? They had their troubles, like the rest of the world, but they never have ceased to love each other, and they are content. There comes old Carmenio now, from his work in the field."

"And how did you know so much about it?" pursued the signora.

"Eh! I was Filomena!"

A CALABRIAN PENELOPE

THE fields were dry, and cracks ran across the furrows that were like parched lips open from thirst. Clouds arose and crossed the face of the sun shining yellow and hot in the middle of the sky; they looked upon the suffering earth and then passed by without pity, giving no drink to the sown fields that languished in the drought. Far away, down among the marshes, hung a thick steam; but here, on the hills, everything was dry and baked. The grain, not yet ripe, was yellow as if it had the fever.

Along the edge of the field ran a row of Indian fig-trees; and in the shadow of one of them sat *compare* Andrea, with Pina, his wife. They had left the house at dawn, and gone to their work in the field, where, kneeling between the furrows, they pulled up the weeds that grew faster than the grain and struck deep roots, as

ill weeds will, to rob the good grain of what little it might have gotten from the earth. In the heat of the noon hour even the little brown tomtits, that hop from furrow to furrow for the worms which come out with the uprooted weeds, had ceased to move and chirp, and were hidden in their nests in the hedge. The crickets, even, were silent; now and then one of them showed his black body and thin, bent legs among the dry blades of the scanty grass. The pretty little green lizards slept under the edges of a flat stone, or moved languidly across it to find a cooler spot. The odors of rosemary, thyme, and a thousand other herbs were drawn out by the hot sun.

Compare Andrea sliced with his clasp-knife the piece of black bread and the *pace di casa*—the small, slender squash that is called "household peace," because when there is enough of it for the family meal there is peace in the house; if not, this good gift of Heaven is better than a stick to enforce peace, and is always at hand to be thrown across the table in the face of any one who speaks inconveniently.

While Andrea and Pina were eating, they talked of the bad year they were having.

"So it is; in this field we sow our life and we reap ruin," complained Andrea.

"The blades of grain seem to me like so many of my children, and I can do nothing for them," responded Pina, with two great tears in her eyes. "The grain dies in our sight, and the ill weeds come to make its funeral."

"It is like ourselves," said her husband, knitting his brows; "we are poor and barely live; and there comes the *galantuomo*, who buys and sells us like the land and the beasts that he owns. He lives like the sun in the sky with one hand in the other; he does no work, and takes everything. If it is a good year, there is always something to pay; if it is a bad year, it is we who must bear the expenses of it, as if it were our fault. 'Pay, pay!' says the agent of the *galantuomo*, and he opens his great books with the rows of figures fit to give you an apoplexy to see them, and here is your name, and this is due, and that other, and you tear your hair in vain. And if you make a bad

face at it, a reprimand; and if you have no money, the judge orders a *pignoramento*, and an officer comes to take all your goods; and if you put your hands on the officers of justice, there is the prison. They are all brigands. It appears to me that it is better to be the weed than the grain, and get what one can. For my part, I shall turn brigand, I!"

At this saying Pina started. "Brigand! no, do not say it," she begged him. "We are honest people that have never done harm to our neighbors. If you turn brigand, when your hour comes you will leave me to weep for an excommunicated man—and from the heat of to-day you can judge if it is hot down there."

Compare Andrea was silent. Pina plucked some withered sprays of mint, and crumbled the dry leaves between her fingers, while she watched him with a sidelong gaze.

"Swear to me that you will think no more of brigands," urged Pina. She wiped the tears from her burning cheeks with the hem of her cotton gown, which was turned up over her

petticoat so as not to spoil it while she was at work. "Swear it to me, Andrea. The carabineers would make a mark of you, and then—"

Pina covered her face with her hands and sobbed. A tinkle of small bells was heard from the slope of the hill, and soon Fra Giacomo, he that went about to collect alms, came riding along the dusty road on his stout, black mule. The Franciscan friar was stout himself; he smiled with a good-natured air, and asked:

"How much do you give me for the good of your soul, compare Andrea?"

"Oh! as for the soul, then," replied Andrea, "rather tell me, *reverendo*, how to keep one inside the body in the bad year we are having."

"There are always some pence for the Holy Church and the repose of the souls of your dead," urged Fra Giacomo. "If you give me a little, I shall pray for rain upon your land; if not, the will of Heaven be done."

"If you had spoken a little word to the blessed saints four weeks ago," said Andrea,

"it would have been a fine thing, for then every drop of rain was worth so much gold."

"Give him something, give," recommended Pina, pulling her husband by the sleeve.

"For the Church, my brother," added Fra Giacomo.

Andrea took two copper coins from his pocket, and put them into the hand of the friar, who played the deaf man in order not to hear "Holy brigand!" muttered over the offering. Then Fra Giacomo gave his blessing to compare Andrea and his wife, turned the mule about, and set off at a careful pace down the road.

"Brigands here, brigands there," said Andrea; "I tell you the truth, I will not lead this life any longer. And this blessed day I shall push into the *macchia;* the trees are thick beyond there in the forest of La Sila; and if the guards find me, you know whether I, too, am a sharp-shooter. *A chi tocca, tocca,* he whose hour is come, will fall."

"If you care no longer for me or for our children," said Pina, "is there no other way to forsake us than to become a brigand?"

"I shall not forsake you so, no," replied Andrea. "You shall come with me. There is a place in the forest where from the mountain ridge one looks upon both seas. The rocks there are like a *difesa* built by masons. We can make our home there; and when the *galantuomini* shall come near, upon the road, in their fine carriages, with their pockets full of the money which we have taken out of the earth for them with our hands, for which we have risked our skins in the forest or sucked the poison of the marshes—then we will take back our own. What do you say to that?"

"I will not hear of it," Pina answered, steadily. "Listen, Andrea: when we come to die we could not enjoy a Christian end. The priest would not bring the blessed oil nor light a candle in the house of a brigand."

"So much the better," said Andrea. "When my uncle was shot at night, in the *piazzetta*—for the affair of the stolen goat that you know of—Don Serafino put his head out of the window as we knocked at his door. There on the stones lay my uncle in a pool of blood, and

the goat, with its fore-feet tied together, still hanging across his shoulder. 'Help! help! *reverendo!*' we cried; 'here is *zio* Menico dying!' 'It rains by basinfuls, my sons,' says Don Serafino to us; 'I take on my own conscience the sins of that dying man, I take them.' And he shut the window as if it had been the gate of Paradise, and went back to his bed to stretch his arms and legs and get warm, while poor uncle grew cold. Brigand of a Don Serafino, that would rob us in this world and the next!"

Comare Pina was discouraged and made no reply. The shadow of the Indian fig-tree beneath which they were sitting now began to fall across the large cracked stone where there were so many lizards, proving that the hour of noon was past. Andrea put back in his pocket the clay pipe which he had not thought to light, and took up his spade. Pina also arose, knelt between the furrows, and began to tear up the weeds as if each one of them had been an enemy. The locusts sang anew their canticle in praise of the sun; the lizards came forth and

glided about, graceful as ladies; the tomtits hopped here and there, shaking their impertinent little tails, and took the worms almost from under the hands that uprooted the weeds.

When the twilight came Andrea and his wife went to their house. They had worked on, speaking very little; but compare Andrea had been turning over and over in his mind the thoughts that filled it, like heavy mill-stones with nothing between them to grind. He had observed, among the weeds and soil, Pina's hands stained and spread with hard work, and how the wedding-ring, that scarcely could have slipped over the joints of her finger, shone against the dark earth of the furrows. Then the memory of the time had come back to him when comare Pina, beautiful with her sixteen years, used to pass by the field where he tended a flock of goats. She wore her holiday clothes —a red skirt, a dark jacket with ever so many bright metal buttons, an apron of stamped Cosenza leather tied with ribbons; a white linen *tovagliolo* covered the black braids of her hair, and in her ears were great hoops of

gold hung with tinkling balls. She carried in her hand a knotted kerchief full of tomatoes or Indian figs—on the way, she explained, to visit her grandmother, who lived, however, in the opposite direction. But, as she further explained, to reach the house of the *nonna*, one must cross the pasture where compare Santo, the *mandriano*, kept his cattle.

"And of bovine beasts," she would say, "you know if I am afraid of them, compare Andrea."

It was on one of these occasions that she had promised to marry Andrea. He had been gathering wild asparagus when she came near, and his hands were soiled, so he cleaned them on the sides of his trousers before he took Pina in his arms and kissed her. Then they sat down on the grass together and ate all the Indian figs that were in her kerchief, with no thought of the *nonna*; and he tied around her throat the little heart of filigree gold on a blue ribbon, which he had bought for her in the city of Cosenza, when he went there to sell some goats; and which he had carried in his pocket

until the right occasion should come for making her a present of it.

"Pina," at last said Andrea, "you know whether from my soul I care for you and for our children. But this life makes me die. I met compare Santo on the road last evening. He seemed in great good humor. He told me that he was tired of eating black bread and wearing sheepskin breeches, and has decided to sail next week with a ship that goes from the port of Messina over to America, where they gather money like strawberries. There are grcat virgin forests there, and mines of gold and of silver, and endless herds of cattle and sheep, and all the people are *galantuomini*, and no one lacks the good gifts of Heaven. I shall go to America with compare Santo; and when I have put together a great heap of money, I shall come back to take you and our children over with me. Shall I go to America, Pina *mia?*"

"Yes," she answered; "since you love us like that, Andrea, you shall go wherever it appears pleasing to you. The sky stands over

America as here; and if you do no wrong, you will get no harm. Rather, you will be nearer to my heart there, an honest man, than a brigand here at my side. Meanwhile, I shall wait for you in our house with our children; and when I no longer have work in the seed-field, I can put my hands to the loom, I can do white sewing, or wash clothes, to support the children and keep them out of the middle of the road."

"Always the *galantuomini* who ruin us," grumbled Andrea. "They rob us of our labor and our life, and drive us from our families and our houses."

Who could count the tears that comare Pina shed during the night before Andrea went away? It would be like counting the drops of a river. But in the morning no trace of them was left upon her face, bronzed and hardened by the wind and the sun. She made up a package of her husband's best clothes, and let him go. She watched him on the road until sight could follow him no longer, and then returned slowly into the house, searching in her mind for a little comfort. He would send her a

letter from Messina, where there are expert *scrivani* that know how to say everything with the pen before you have the words out of your mouth, or even in your mind. Andrea would send her a letter, one of those fine ones.

Meanwhile, her husband walked on, in company with compare Santo, who had joined him at the turn of the road; and singing as he went, to drive away the sad thoughts that disturbed his mind, one of the bitter songs of the Calabrian people:

"O my bad case! Where is the field I have sown,
The field between two mountain streams that lay?
I sowed good grain, and gathered grief alone;
My wheat, in threshing, flew like flies away.
To buy my field, a rich man came from town;
No money, only buffets, did he pay.
I went to court, to make my grievance known—
The captain took me off to prison that day."

The promised letter came from Messina in due time. The *scrivano* understood his business, and earned his two *soldi*. He did not spare fine expressions; he added, to the spontaneous words of affection that compare Andrea sent to his dear ones, the information

that the traveler, crossing from Calabria to Messina, had passed in safety the tremendous perils of the ancient Scylla and Charybdis. He said nothing of sirens, however, so it may be hoped that the good Andrea met none. And to the signature, with magnificent flourishes, worth by itself the two *soldi*, compare Andrea set his brave cross, in black on white, with a good pen.

Comare Pina, left alone with her children, gave up the field, stayed in the house, and earned what little she could by white sewing and by weaving the beautiful cloth in arabesques, which is the art of some of the Calabrian women. The children, also, did what they were able to do; the little girls could sweep the house, and clean the rice, or knead the bread, and the boy could shoot with his bow and arrows the small game which abounded in the *macchia*. He, with his little sisters, also planted beans and tomatoes in a small three-cornered piece of ground behind the house, and cared for the pig, the goat, and the half-dozen hens.

As soon as compare Andrea set foot on the new continent, he had a letter written to Pina. The country was called Argentina, he said, and, no doubt, there was silver for everybody. After that, comare Pina received no more letters from him.

When a year had passed, bad news reached the village concerning compare Santo, the herdsman who went away with Andrea. He was dead in America, of yellow fever, he and several other Italians, his companions. Of these, said the letter written to the parish priest of the village, one only remained unrecognized, since he had no papers by which his name and country could be proved, but he was believed to be of Calabria.

The good priest, successor to Don Serafino, was made of very different stuff from that unworthy, who ate his bread perfidiously without caring for the souls of his parish. Hardly was the letter read before Don Geremia mounted his mule and betook himself to visit the poor Pina. The *comari* of the neighborhood, who had heard from the sister of the curate some

word of the misfortune of compare Santo, had gathered at Pina's house, from motives of good will mixed with curiosity. Don Geremia let Pina know, as gently as he could, the sad suspicion of the death of Andrea. When he had finished speaking, the women began to shriek and tear their hair. Pina alone remained as if she were made of stone.

"Courage, my daughter, and patience," recommended Don Geremia, placing his hand gently on her shoulder.

Pina turned suddenly toward him. "And why not, *signor curato?*" she said. "I can have courage, for I know that my man will come back. He promised it to me. And as for patience, I have had it a whole year—I have had it!"

She would never admit a doubt of Andrea's return, nor let any one speak of him as dead, although after a little time she chose, for respect, to put on mourning for him, by wearing, as is the custom of the place, all her husband's waistcoats, one upon the other, over her dress, until they were worn out and fell into rags.

But she firmly maintained that Andrea would, some time, surely come back to her.

"I do not believe," she said, "that such evil has happened. One day, indeed, I felt myself *adocchiata*, and went to *zia* Agata, the wise woman, to have the evil eye taken away from me. It may have been too late—what do I know? She put the salt and water on my face, made the sign of the cross, and said the verses; and I yawned and yawned fit to unhinge my jaw, so that it was a pleasure to see. It is therefore certain that there was the witchcraft. But what *magaria!* All that came of it was that a hen died the same night and my daughter broke a dish. That was enough, but it was not for Andrea."

Meanwile there were not lacking those who wished to marry Pina, seeing her so courageous and with two fingers' breadth more of brain than most women have. Among them was compare Giuseppe, who owned not only his house and lands and a discreet number of cattle, but also the dowries of the three wives that he had buried.

"So many thanks," said Pina to him, "but I must care for my soul before I am ready to leave this world, and even then you would have the embarrassment of choosing a fifth woman."

The agent of the baron, who had moustaches like those of a cat, wished to take her with him to the city; and compare Gianni, a well-to-do *massaro*, would willingly have married her and assumed the support of her four children—so much did he esteem her—for she was good as bread, a woman that worked all day and wasted nothing, not even an onion-top; was never of cost to her man, and so neat that—as the saying is—she would not wash her face in order not to soil the water. Whoever married comare Pina would make a good bargain.

But she would listen to none of these suitors; and one evening, when the agent of the *galantuomo*, he of the moustaches, came under her window to sing with his guitar, Pina threw a pail of water on him, so that he shivered as if he had the fever. That water was not wasted, for the agent of the baron never came

again to buzz around the house of comare Pina.

If the neighbors spoke to her of compare Gianni, who would be a good husband to her and also maintain her children, she answered seriously:

"One husband I have already, and that is enough for an honest woman."

It was no less than seven years after the time that compare Andrea went to America, that a stranger entered on foot the one long street of the village. This man was poorly clothed, a little bent, and walked leaning slightly upon a stick. His conical hat with a wide brim was lowered upon his forehead, and he appeared at the same time weary and in haste. He came to the *piazzetta*, where the women were filling their jars at the fountain, and asked for water to drink. While he was drinking, he looked anxiously at one and another of the women. It seemed as though he wished to ask some question; but in the end he decided not to do so, and contented himself with merely thanking the woman who had of-

fered him her jar. Then he went on his way until he reached the house of comare Pina. Here he came to a halt before the door. He passed his hand more than once across his brow; for it seemed to him, as to a drowning person, that he saw crowding before his sight all that had happened during so many years. What was it in the odor of the rosemary and the thyme that almost made the tears come to his eyes? Was such a thing ever heard of! *Su, animo!* At least, he was again in his own country.

The old dog, which had been the faithful companion of compare Andrea, lay stretched across the door-stone asleep, rousing himself now and then to snap at the flies that teased him. He heard the step of the stranger, lifted his head, and listened a moment. Then he arose, growled, was silent for an instant, licked the hand of the stranger, and finished with barking joyously.

Comare Pina left the loom, and came to the door to see what ailed Turco that he should bark so loudly. The stranger stretched out his hands to her.

"It is I, Pina *mia*," he said. "I am come back."

Pina stood motionless, as if she doubted what was said to her. The dog pulled at her skirt. The little daughters came from the field behind the house, and stood staring with great eyes at the stranger. In a few moments there assembled some *comari* of the neighborhood, who watched the traveler on the road.

"Pina, Pina, I am Andrea," he said. "Will you not recognize me?"

"Look, Pina," interposed comare Barbara, who always thrust herself into the affairs of others. "Do you not see that it is truly compare Andrea? He is badly dressed, it is true, so that he appears like a beggar—but that does not prevent one from recognizing the large nose that his mamma made him."

"Are you not glad to see me again?" urged Andrea.

"It is so long, so long!" murmured Pina to herself. "Who can say if it be really Andrea? I do not know—and I am Andrea's wife."

"Say, Pina, is not this your man?" asked one of the neighbors.

"What do I know about it?" responded Pina, mournfully.

At this moment her son came down from the forest. Over his shoulder hung some rabbits which he had shot; and his father's large gun, almost too heavy for a youth, was in his hands.

"Who is this that comes to disturb my mamma?" he asked, and when he looked angry he was all his father.

"I am your papa," Andrea answered him.

"Is my papa come back again?" said the boy. "We have waited so long—mamma, and the little sisters and I."

Comare Pina snatched the gun from her son's hands. "If you truly are my Andrea," she said, "you can shoot, and so prove it to me."

Andrea's eyes gleamed under the rim of his hat. He held out his hands a little tremulously. "I may have lost my skill," he observed. "I am out of practice."

Nevertheless, he took the gun from her hands.

"It may be so," cried Pina, "but you have to shoot."

"Pina! Pina!" entreated the other women, frightened without knowing why.

She drew off her wedding-ring by main force. Andrea, looking on confusedly, saw that her fingers were grown much thinner during the seven years of his absence. She ran many paces across the road; and, raising her left hand to her head, she held, between thumb and forefinger, the sacramental ring near her throbbing temple.

"Shoot!" she commanded.

"Heavens, no, Pina! For pity's sake!" begged Andrea. "Tell me, rather, to shoot myself."

"Shoot!" repeated his wife.

"Oh! Will you not believe me—I am, I am your Andrea, your husband. I will prove it to you in so many ways, only give me a little time," he prayed her.

"If you are my Andrea," answered Pina, "you can send the bullet through the ring that you gave me. If you are not he—draw the

trigger and burn my brain, for I have waited and hoped too long to be disappointed at last. Shoot!"

All the *comari* screamed and hid their faces from fear; the daughters ran into the house and crouched under the bed, not to see what was being done. The boy flung himself across the door-stone, burying his face in the hair of the dog.

Andrea glanced at Pina. She did not look at him. Her wide-open eyes were turned toward the sky and seemed blinded by the rays of the sunset. Andrea threw down his hat, straightened himself, raised the gun to his shoulder, took aim, and fired.

Comare Barbara was the only one who could look at such a horror; it is true that the neighbors said of her that she would have watched the torment of the souls in purgatory, in order to be able to tell the story of it afterward, she was such a chatterbox. In relating this story, she never failed to say it was a pleasure to see the bullet pass straight through the ring, as if it had been the finger

of a bride; and Pina's hand that held the ring never moved, though the wind of the bullet ruffled her hair.

And then poor Pina ran, all in tears, fell at her husband's feet, and, clasping his knees, prayed him to put the ring again on her finger, as if they were standing before the priest. He lifted her from the ground, and, with his arm around her, led her into the house.

It was true, the neighbors agreed, that compare Andrea had brought back little from America; and he said that it was like the rest of the world—money was not as the stones of the road, even there. But with what little he had saved from his earnings he was able to buy back his land, and some more with it. He spent much of his time also at the shop of Maso the blacksmith, trying to construct a plough that should be different from those which had satisfied the good souls of his father and grandfather; and in other ways it appeared to the neighbors that his head was no longer up to the mark. It might have been the effect of the yellow fever—who knows?—that gave him the

whim of inventing these things. The fact is, too much thinking spoils the brain!

But it was also true that, because of the extraordinary plough, or for some other reason, the land of compare Andrea bore twice as much as the fields of his neighbors; and he had good fortune with his cattle, sheep, and poultry. It became necessary for him, besides himself and his son, to hire men for the herds and the land. The truth is, riches are like ducks—they run to those who know how to call them.

And it was really a consolation to see comare Pina so contented at the side of her husband that she would not have wished to be in the clothes of the queen. The only anxiety which remained to her was lest Andrea should some time desire to cross the ocean again, to revisit America, and seek fortune in the Republica Argentina. Meanwhile, her seven years of lonely weaving and waiting were ended.

THE STORY OF CIRILLO

WHENEVER Don Giuseppe, the parish priest, went over in his mind all that he came to know while he watched that night by the bedside of Cirillo, the frog-seller, who died at the dawn, he always crossed himself and said: "That poor fellow went straight to Paradise, let us hope; for Purgatory he had here below on earth."

This was what Don Giuseppe heard from Cirillo, and he kept it to himself like a confession:

Thirty years before, day for day, there was a great festival on the estates of the baron because an heir was born to him. Squibs and muskets were fired all day in the *piazzetta*; casks of wine, of the kind that rich people drink, were tapped for whomever wished to take a glass; in the evening, the lads and girls danced to the music of the town band, and

rockets and bengal lights dashed up through the air, while the people stood staring with open mouth, to see them burst into a rain of gold and silver and colored fires. Only the wife of the baron, poor lady, cared nothing for what was done. As the women had said beforehand, she was fragile as glass, and indeed, a few days after her child came into the world, she went out of it, gently, like a lamp that lacks oil. The bishop himself came to confess her, although, said the women, she was such a saint that to give her absolution was like carrying clean clothes to the tank to be washed. The baron was in despair, and turned his shoulders to the Madonna del Carmine, who had done him such a bad turn, after the two candles that he had given to her, tall as the sacristan's boy, and of pure wax.

Meanwhile the little baron screamed for hunger, in his fine cradle all laces and silk, so that they were obliged to send to the mountain for *comare* Bibiana, the carrier's wife, who had a little son a fortnight old, to come to the great house to take the signorino away to

nurse him. She came in her husband's cart, handsome and healthy, dressed for a holiday, with many necklaces, and rings up to the joint of the ten fingers; and when the doctor, Don Luca Vitale, put the baby into her arms, she said that it was beautiful as an eye of the sun, so that it appeared like the child of a king; and that, even if her own little one had to be stinted, she would always content first the signorino. At the sight of the poor dead lady on the bier between the lighted tapers, comare Bibiana wept, and began to tear her hair with one hand, holding, meanwhile, the child upon her neck with the other, and to shriek, as is the custom on such occasions. But Don Luca Vitale put his hands upon her shoulders, and pushed her, with good manners, out of the room, saying: "Think of the little baron, think of him!"

Then the housekeeper, Donna Sabina Mosca, with a handkerchief at her eyes, led comare Bibiana into another room, and made her eat something from the table where the *cunsulàtu* was spread, all the good gifts of heaven, while

the women wept in a group at one side. Then they showed comare Bibiana down the staircase and out of the great door, under the escutcheon draped with black cloth; and she, stunned with awe and with pity for that poor mother who had to go away to stay with the saints, leaving her little creature on earth, climbed into the cart. Maso handed her their own child, that they were obliged to bring with them: she accommodated a baby on each shoulder. "*Arricà!*" cried Maso to his mules; and so the little baron went away from his house, far upon the road that leads from Cosenza to the hills of the Jassi.

Indeed, it was a pity that the baron had it against his son, poor innocent, for the child was fine and robust, so that it was a consolation to see him. But the baron, every time that *mastro* Gaetano Starace, the steward, or Donna Sabina Mosca, ventured to hint as much, answered: "That one I will not see, for he cost me the mother."

Neither would he think of taking another wife, not even if she were a king's daughter,

beautiful as the moon and the sun, and rich as the sea. "That saint," he would say, "prays for me in Paradise."

And, for her sake, he took thought to make his soul, so much so that he caused two candles, larger than before, to be lighted in honor of the Madonna del Carmine; and since it is the business of the Beautiful Mamma to forgive, he in his heart did not doubt of pardon for the former slight.

Meanwhile, the little baron, Corradino, and Cirillo, the son of the carrier, were always together, in the cradle, or under a hedge when comare Bibiana worked in the fields. Each was prettier than the other: there was no choice. One day, however, by ill luck, it happened that as Bibiana sat in the doorway spinning, with the little baron on her knee, while her baby rolled, like a chicken, in the dust, stretching his hand toward the foster-brother, the poor little noble lost his balance and fell on the flat door-stone. He cried but little, then; afterward he whimpered always, with open eyes, as if somebody had taken away his

sleep; and Bibiana kissed him the more, because every wail was like a reproach to her for that fall on the stone. The son of the baron seemed to pine slowly, while the carrier's baby grew fat as a little pig, and slept like a spindle.

Finally the baron forgave his child, that he had not seen since the mother died—because it was no use to have ill will toward him who was not in fault, and also because there would, in future, be wanted an heir for the property. So the steward and the housekeeper were sent to bring back the little Don Corradino. As the carriage made the turn of the road, comare Bibiana saw them. She was taken with a sudden terror of the baron's anger when he should see that puny child, with pale face and hanging arms, with shoulders bent as if already under the burden of what he was to bear in his lifetime. It would be a ruin! Bibiana took her own fine boy in her arms and went out to meet the carriage, leaving alone in the house the little baron whimpering by the hearth. Donna Sabina Mosca received the

child from comare Bibiana, kissing it with respect, and calling it Don Corradino, while mastro Gaetano counted into the hands of the nurse the sum agreed upon, with something over and above. They thanked her, and made her a compliment of a pair of solid gold ear-rings. Then they went away, before comare Bibiana had time to think what a sin she had committed. When she heard Maso on the road, talking to his mules, content because he had earned two *tarì* more than usual, Bibiana ran out and said so much that she induced him to swear by the souls of his dead that he never would make known what she had done, for she had acted for the best, she had acted! And if the *signor barone* had had the displeasure of that poor little one, who knows that he would not have sent to demand the rent that was due, and the sheriff would have made the *pignoramento*, and left them in the middle of the road, she admonished Maso.

So because, in fact, what is done is done, and also a little because of the thought that his own blood was gone to riches and honor,

compare Maso gave himself peace about it and kept silence. Neighbors they had none; if they wished to bargain, or hear the news, it was necessary to go to the village, an hour distant. So the misdeed of comare Bibiana was not suspected.

She had, however, the punishment for it. If Maso came home at evening, and sat mute because of hunger or weariness, Bibiana believed that he was thinking of the child that she robbed from him to give to the baron. Between the pair there were reproaches and gloom; sometimes they quarreled, and Maso raised his hand against his wife. One day he came in haste to tie up his bundle, for he was going with cousin Vito Bacigalupo, and some others, down there to America; and he gave to Bibiana half of the price for which he had sold the mules and the cart. After that, no more was ever heard of him.

All this, Cirillo learned for the first time when mamma Bibiana died. They had lived together on the mountain, loving each other even more than is usual between mother and

son; they were, indeed, as is the saying, two souls in one hazel nut. Cirillo, at fifteen years, was grown strong like the twisted olive-tree which yet withstands all weathers, as heaven sends; his long, meagre arms were never tired, and on his bent shoulders he could carry a load like a donkey. He worked here and there, wherever he was wanted; mamma Bibiana had been ill for some time; now, he told her, it was his turn to support her. One rainy evening he came home, after a week that he had crawled on hands and knees in the mud, gathering the olives of *massaro* Giovanni Volpintesta, who haggled over the few *soldi* paid to those that worked in that cold and mire—and found mamma Bibiana crouching by the hearth, with a kerchief on her head. "Eat," she told him; "there is the *minestra* in the dish on the fire. As for me, I'm going to bed, for I have round my head like an iron hoop."

In the heart of the night Cirillo awoke, frightened; he wanted to see the mother. He went down from the loft where he slept, fluttering the hens that roosted on the ladder,

and groped toward the bedside of Bibiana. He lit the oil lamp, and by that feeble light saw her face sharp and changed. "Mamma, mamma!" he cried, and would have run for Don Giuseppe to bring the Lord into the house, but Bibiana grasped his hands. "And you stay here," she told him. "It is to you that I have to confess, for I have done you a wrong."

And, in short, she told him how he, and not Don Corradino, was the son of the baron. She wept, pressing his hands to her breast; but he answered: "And who but you, mamma, would have loved me that am so ugly!"

She told him everything—as he in his turn, fifteen years later, told it to Don Giuseppe. She recommended him to forgive Maso, too, in case he ever returned from America. "And you, Cirillo, stay here in Calabria, a land blessed of the Lord, where even the stones are like so many friends, and there is a Christian people that will not let you lack bread if you keep yourself honest. For this idea of America is like the morgana that is told of by sailors;

there are palaces as if let down from Paradise, but they are in the clouds, and while you look they melt, and who has seen them has seen them. But you, Cirillo, stay here. And if ever you wish to claim your right, a witness to the truth can be Don Luca Vitale, who saw you born, and must know that the baron's son had a birthmark on the right thigh, a palm's breadth above the knee."

Then she began to mutter, turning her head from side to side on the husk pallet, clasping Cirillo's hands. Finally, her fingers twitched and relaxed. Mamma Bibiana was dead. Cirillo, to let her soul pass, flung open the shutters of the window, where the dawn began to show. The cock crowed on the straw-rick. Cirillo wept because the mamma was dead, and even more because she was not truly his mother, but, instead, that baroness whom he had never known. The cock crowed again. "That cock sings to remind me of St. Peter; no and then no, I will never deny that good soul that was my mother more than she of whom I was born!"

The cock crowed the third time. Cirillo raised his hand as if before a justice: "I swear it to you, mamma!"

Because the illness of Bibiana had eaten up the little savings, Cirillo had to give up all the goods to pay what was on the books of mastro Gaetano, and for the funeral of mamma Bibiana, who slept as well behind the hedge of the *camposanto* as that other mother of the baron in the tomb with the escutcheon. When the baron heard of this, for charity he sent for Cirillo to be his servant; and those days were not bad for the poor fellow, for he had food and drink, and a little place under the stairs to sleep in. Sometimes, as he served the baron, who was now old, Cirillo would think, "What if he knew that I am his son!" But the sight of himself in the great mirror drove away that thought; only mamma Bibiana could have loved him, ugly as he was! But at times, passing through the hall where were portraits of so many barons and baronesses, that were only dust and a name but for those canvases, he would lift his eyes to them and say, "You

know very well that a place there belongs to me also."

All straight, with heads high—those lords; not one of them had ever fallen on the door-stone. And were it in order to be a king with a crown, Cirillo would not have denied mamma Bibiana; for every time that he thought of these things, it seemed to him that a cock crowed in his heart.

Finally, the baron was stricken by an apoplexy, and the old doctor, Don Luca Vitale, came and looked through his great horn-rimmed glasses, took snuff, and shook his head. He despatched a servant to the palace of the Bishop, and then turned to Cirillo, saying to him, "Run to call the heir; his father, perhaps, can at least press his hand."

Cirillo clapped his palm upon his right leg, above the knee, for it appeared to him that the doctor was shrewd enough to see through the cloth of his trousers. He met Don Corradino coming into the courtyard from a boar-hunt; the signorino threw down his gun and ran to the chamber where the old baron lay in

the great bed with red silk curtains. And Cirillo thrust himself into his den under the stairs, until he heard Don Luca's heavy tread descending, and the great door open and close as the physician went out. That occasion was past, and he had not denied mamma Bibiana.

After the time of mourning for the old baron was ended, the new baron, Don Corradino, sold some lands, and it was known that he was going to Paris of France. Mastro Gaetano would rule things, as indeed he had done for years; Cirillo also would remain; the women were dismissed, and Donna Sabina Mosca was pensioned and went to live at the house of a niece at Cosenza, with money enough to let her pass the days with her hands upon her belt. When after a year the baron returned, he brought with him a servant from Paris, a young fellow with moustaches like a cat, mischievous as a red donkey, who made a butt of Cirillo and sneered when the poor man, teased by those unkind looks, let fall a dish on the floor. This man aped Cirillo's movements and modes; and did so much that at last the baron said, "Ohè, Cirillo, here you

come in like Pontius Pilate into the creed; it is better for you to stay in the stables, and take care of my horses."

So Cirillo slept no more under the stairs, but in the hayloft. It appeared that those good beasts knew more than Christians; they understood that Cirillo was of noble race, like themselves, and they took to loving him. He cleaned and fed them, and trained the colts; and whenever the baron sent any to be sold at Cosenza, Cirillo led them by the halter; and when the bargain was made, he with the pretext of tightening the leather strap, would approach his mouth to the ear of the horse and whisper, "Good-bye and good luck, my brother!"

Then the baron took the whim to go as far as England, where they never see the sun because of the fog; and that time also he brought back a servant, a nimble little man with a red face, and gave him charge of the stables, where he chewed straws and hissed like a serpent as he groomed the horses, and commanded Cirillo to bring buckets of water. "Look,

Cirillo," said the baron, "now that there is Tommy for the horses, go you to the chestnuts."

Up there, on the mountain, the chestnut crop had been computed upon the trees by compare Nunzio who came from Malito on purpose—one-third for *massaro* Cola Brancalupo who had the *torre* and the groves on *mezzadria* and two-thirds for the baron that owned the land. Cirillo had to watch the drying of the chestnuts, night and day, in the acrid smoke of the green wood that at first gave him a deuced cough, while the tears ran down his face. But he became used to it, as to everything. At the *spelatura*, he trampled the nuts with his wooden shoes, stimulating the other fellows that worked with him, and crying "*Viva sant' Antonio!*" while the down of the chestnuts flew in the air and the nuts rattled in the sieves. Then later in November, he went with the long line of ploughs to the fields of the Vallo, where the black earth steamed; while the quails flew over in great flocks on the way to Africa, crying *quà, quà, quà.* Then to the olive-groves where

Cirillo swung himself among the highest branches, with his long arms, to beat down the olives, while men, women and children crept about on the muddy ground to gather them. At *Ave Maria*, shelter was sought in the farm-house; there the lads and girls danced to the *cornamusa* and the *ciaramedda*. But Cirillo invited no one to dance; who would dance with him, ugly as he was? The *massaro* talked with him about the old baron, good soul, and the extravagances of the young baron; and also about King Vittorio who soon would have driven away all the strangers, like so many wolves. "But I am not yet old," thought Cirillo, "and if it was known that I am the baron, even comare Menica there would dance with me, ugly as I am."

After the olives, Cirillo had to work in the fields, those fat fields of the Vallo where malaria overcomes the peasant and puts him to bed with the fever. So it happened to Cirillo; and he took refuge in a hovel there, near a pond, and every day that he had the fever he stayed under a coverlet and his great cloak, with a

kerchief on his head; and other days he went in a cracked boat that was there, to catch fish and eels in the pond. He caught frogs too, which in Calabria are called singing fishes, and since he was no longer able to work for the baron he set up an industry of his own, selling fish and frogs through the country, crying with his fine voice: "*Pesci cantanti, pesci cantanti!*" So, because of his bent shoulders and long arms, and eyes dull from the malaria, the people who did not know his name called him the *pesce cantante*, for indeed he resembled a frog. And as he stood in the mud up to his knees, to catch the frogs that populated it, like the peasants on the lands of Don Corradino, he would roll his trousers above the mark upon his leg, and point it out to the frogs, saying, "Here, at least, I am the baron!"

For he lived by them, as the baron lived by the peasants; and if he needed a little money, his hand was heavy upon them, poor beasts, as if they had rented the pond from him.

One day when he carried fish to the great house, he learned that it was a gala day, for

the baron was bringing home his bride, the daughter of a Sicilian duke. Cirillo waited in the courtyard to see the bridal pair come dashing in, behind four fine white horses, while the servants cried, "*Vivano gli sposi!*" in chorus. Cirillo said between himself and himself, "If I had claimed my right, that lady might have married me, instead of the son of Maso the carrier!" Then he shouted "Long live the pair!" with the others, and Donna Isabella turned upon him a smile that appeared to him like the morning star when it shone upon the gloomy pond, at dawn. That was a great lady! Although Cirillo had had little education, except that which came in his blood because he was the son of the baron, and the good principles taught him by mamma Bibiana, and a little *a b c* that he learned of the parish priest—still he comprehended how rude was Baron Corradino: a real peasant like his father the carrier.

But the beautiful baroness appeared to notice nothing, not even when her husband stumbled in the train of her rich gown—no more than the

morning star thinks of the tree-tops which seem to tear the clouds below it. That was truly a great lady! As she passed through the doorway, with the servants in line on each side, Cirillo heard her say, "Who is that poor fellow?" and her husband answered, "It is Cirillo the frog-seller." Cirillo struck his leg a smart blow, in order not to cry out "I am the baron!" Then he thought of mamma Bibiana, and also how useless it would be to make a noise and get himself driven away with sticks. About this, too, he had patience, and went away through the village crying "*Pesci cantanti!*" to sell his frogs to those who wished to make broth for the old or the sick. Afterward, when he brought fish to the great house, the baroness with her maid or her housekeeper who was twice as grand as Donna Sabina Mosca in her time, came sometimes into the courtyard. Donna Isabella would have paid Cirillo more than his price, so much she pitied him; but he would not take more than was due. She talked to him with her sweet voice, while he had a mad wish to throw himself on the ground and kiss the

hem of her gown, as to the Madonna del Carmine; and when she sent the maid to bring a tray of refreshments, Cirillo would take only a little glass of wine and a mouthful of bread that seemed to him like a sacrament. "This *signora baronessa*," he thought, "must be like that other who died to bring me into the world; she was an angel—but my true mother was mamma Bibiana."

The fact is, the angels are well off in heaven; but here on earth one must have a little bit of the demon in one's body, in order not to get the worst of it. And that little bit the baroness had, so that she made her reasons heard many times with Don Corradino. He had the consciousness of being like a rude peasant, despite the escutcheon over the great door, and the gallery of ancestors, and the silver plate with the baronial cipher. Isabella was so beautiful, so white, he was in awe of her; he perceived that she avoided his coarse, stubby hands with the bitten nails. He knew how to talk of nothing but the crops, or hunting, or the theatres of Paris of France, where, instead of the holy

mysteries or the deeds of the Reali or of Guerino il Meschino, they represent things worse than the dance of the witches around the nut-tree of Benevento. She, instead, had instruction; if the king himself had come, she would have talked with him as with any person whatever!

One day, in Cirillo's presence, the baron and the baroness were discussing some trifle, upon the steps of the house; and at a blunder of his she turned upon him her great eyes full of contempt, so that he raised his hand, just like Maso the carrier when he quarreled with Bibiana, and would have given her a box on the ear, only that Cirillo threw himself between them and cried, "Boor, do not touch her!"

At that word the baron lost his compass; he saw everything red before his eyes; he took Cirillo by the neck and threw him backward down the steps, like a sack of rags. The instant of fury past, the baron leaped down into the courtyard, full of remorse; while Donna Isabella ran to call some servants to take Cirillo on their arms into the house. "Here, here,"

cried the baron, flinging open the door of the great room where his father died. "Carry him in here, my poor foster-brother Cirillo!"

Then they saddled a horse to go for the doctor. Cirillo recognized the sound of the hoofs of old Sultano, the roan. "Good-bye and good luck, Sultano," he said. "But it is I who am going away, this time. Then he begged Donna Isabella not to weep, for the baron had not meant to harm him, and between foster-brothers it is easy to forgive.

When Don Luca Vitale, now very old, came, he looked through his glasses and took snuff and shook his head, just as when, so long ago, he visited the baron. It was a question of some broken bones, and strength consumed by the malaria of the Vallo, and Don Luca said certain Latin big words that nobody understood, but they must mean something very grave. Cirillo would hardly last through the night.

When Don Luca Vitale felt of the right leg, broken a little above the knee, Cirillo looked fixedly at him. Now, at last, the truth might have been made plain, and by no act of Cirillo.

But the old doctor had forgotten the birthmark of the son of the baron. "Better so, mamma Bibiana," he muttered; and Don Luca, who was a little deaf, believed that he was complaining of the pain of the leg.

Now that it was too late, Don Corradino would have given his own blood to cure that poor fellow, but Cirillo embraced him and told him it was the will of heaven. If they would have him die in peace, let them send for Don Giuseppe, the parish priest, who taught him what little he could stammer of the breviary, and the duties of a Christian, and for charity had said so many masses, without a *tarì* of pay, for the soul of mamma Bibiana. When Don Giuseppe came, Cirillo would have everyone leave the room, since there was no more to be done for the body, only for the soul, and those servants in gold lace and livery put him in awe so that he could not collect himself to make a good end. To the confessor everything ought to be told; and in that night Cirillo recounted his life to Don Giuseppe, and recommended him to pray for the dying man, but still more

for poor Bibiana who had gone with a sin upon her conscience.

So it was that Cirillo died in the bed where he was born, in the bed with the red silk curtains, where his father died, his grandfather and his great-grandfather. With his last breath, he said, smiling, "Mamma Bibiana!" And in the courtyard a cock crowed, and it was dawn.

THE TREE OF THE BRIDE

THAT year Don Giammaria, the curate, resolved that he would put a stop to the galloping baldness of the mountain. Against the law, the charcoal-burners had cut down the forest without pity, as their fathers did before them; for it is the rich who make the laws, while the poor must live as they can. And an old law, too, is like an old dog that has lost its teeth and can no longer bite. So, at night, the fires reddened here and there on the black, bristling slope; and by day the axes sounded, cutting down the woods. Because the trees were thinned, so that they no longer availed to hold back the snows, as soon as the sirocco began to blow in the spring the little streams, suddenly swollen, flooded the fields of the foothills, and carried away beasts and houses. Ugly landslides had left scars upon the side of the mountain; every one marked a disaster.

That very season *compare* Santo Ferroni had seen a fine pair of oxen drown at the ford, eight legs in the air, and the cart behind them pounding up and down in the torrent, before he could say, "Sant' Eligio help them!" And the widow of Cola Greco, the goatherd, had watched from her doorway while the waters spread over her little field and carried the soil down the stream as if to go to plant that sprouting grain in the sea. Everybody had his troubles with the freshets that season.

So Don Giammaria, in the pulpit, told his parishioners that they had robbed the mountain and must repay; they had reduced it to nakedness and must clothe it again; that even with the earth one ought to be honest, for also she is a creature of the good Lord. Then he came to facts, and said that in future he wouldn't give the sacrament of matrimony to any couple of Christians until the bridegroom should first have brought two young trees from the thicket of the plain, one for himself and one for the bride, and planted them there where the mountain was quite bare, above the small piece of

table-land, somewhat hollowed, which (because of its shape like a kneading-tray) was called the Madia. The roots of the young trees would spread, said Don Giammaria, bind the soil, make head against the melting snows, and thus hinder disasters. And the worthy curate, warming up, made upon that theme such a fine sermon, full of unction, likening those roots to the affections of husband and wife, that many women wept, quite touched by those holy words, and the girls all hung upon his lips.

Certain young fellows, not in the fear of the Lord, as they stood near the door, waiting for the girls to come out, grinned and said that, as for them, it would take as long to choose the trees of marriage as it did Bertoldo—him of the legend—to find the tree that suited him to be hanged upon. Near the altar, compare Girolamo Tadda, who that morning had ridden down from his house at the Madia—on his donkey that was tied to a fig-tree in the churchyard to wait for him—thought of the landslide that, when he was a child, came down the steep, parted to right and left, with a noise like

thunder, behind the house; and how his mother, in her chemise, snatched him from the bed and ran out with him in her arms. Now that his parents were dead, he lived alone in the hut; he had scarcely thought of marriage; his sole companion was that little black donkey, called la Muridda, kind and intelligent, that listened to all that he said, and almost seemed to have speech, nodding her head and shaking her ears. "We are well off, eh?" he would say to her, and la Muridda would turn on him her sober eyes and thrust her moist muzzle into his hand.

That Sunday, however, the words of Don Giammaria stuck like nails in the mind of compare Girolamo. Riding up the mountain, he without his own will, looked at the trees beside the path. "That one would do for the bridegroom, for 'tis tall and stout like compare Mico that carries the banner in the processions; that other, so pretty, would be for the bride; no, here's another still more beautiful!" And once he stopped la Muridda in order to look at a little fir-tree, until the good beast lost patience,

lifted her head and let off her voice, as if to remind him that they should go home. "Right you are, my little old one. *Arricicà!*"

They followed the path, full of stones and stumps, up to that piece of land, somewhat sheltered by the rocks that formed the sides of the "kneading-tray," where compare Girolamo had the house, and a little ground planted with cabbages and broad beans. He led the donkey into the house, tied her by the halter in a corner where was a litter of straw, gave her some barley and hay, then put a dish of *minestra* to the embers, ate, and finally went to bed, where his snoring outranked the finest bray that la Muridda had ever sent forth in the face of earth and heaven. And who knows whether there came into his dreams the trees of the bridegroom and the bride!

But destiny willed that compare Girolamo should one day go in search of those two trees, and thus it happened: As he went down the mountain, walking at the side of the donkey that was almost hidden by the load of fagots, he smoked his clay pipe, content under the

April sun. La Muridda, with nose lowered, took care for her steps, setting her hoofs accurately on the rough path, full of pebbles. The fagots creaked, and some big round cabbages that crowned the load reeled as if drunken, so that compare Girolamo had now and then to put his hand to steady them. Down there, where the mountain path joins the road to Cosenza, he saw a cart that moved slowly; then the woods hid it from sight. As he reached the main road, he saw that the cart had stopped. The mule that had drawn it was fallen and lay motionless. The master was on his knees beside the poor beast, while a girl gathered up the things thrown to the ground.

"Help! help! Christians!" cried the master of the mule.

Compare Girolamo ran to him, leaving la Muridda, that thrust her nose into a clump of thistles as if it were no affair of hers. The fallen mule, old, with projecting bones, was dead between the shafts.

"He has fallen—your mule?" said compare Girolamo.

"Rather, he won't get up again!"

"Better a beast than a baptized person, if that is the will of heaven."

"And we are ruined, we are! We must go to the fair at Cosenza, I and my daughter Anastasia here present. And what can be done, now my mule is dead and my stuff scattered on the ground?"

On hearing the name of the girl, compare Girolamo for the first time looked at her. She was beautiful, with heavy braids of red hair, lithe as a cat; her lips were full and scarlet, and she had certain large eyes, the color of black wine, that disquieted him. Over that head, that was like burnished copper, was tied a black silk kerchief. Her cotton-and-wool gown was rather ragged, plaids of ash-color and green. She sat on the ground, looking at a puppet that she held in her hand, all a rag of torn tinsel. As she saw that compare Girolamo was looking at her, she began to laugh, showing her fine teeth, and made the Pulcinella dance in the air.

"Beautiful, do you think?" she asked compare Girolamo.

He, poor fellow, saw only her eyes, that glowed like the thick Calabrian wine, and answered, "Beautiful indeed, *gnà* 'Nastasia."

She laughed louder; then rose to her feet and began to put the puppets and the properties in order in the cart, while the two men drew the dead mule out of the shafts. The owner of the puppet-show lamented, thrusting his hands in his hair, "Oh, blessed Sant' Eligio, draw the cart for me yourself, since you wouldn't save the poor beast! If not, how shall I do in order to set up, in the piazza at Cosenza, my famous puppet-show, the *castello* of mastro Orlando Zaccardo, favored by the aristocracy and the illustrious military everywhere!"

Compare Girolamo had an idea that did not seem his own, it was so opportune. Rather, it appeared to him suggested by those bewitching eyes of Anastasia which excited his stupid brain, for, says the proverb, "The goad puts feeling into donkeys."

"Listen, mastro Zaccardo," he said. "I will run to disembarrass la Muridda of the fagots,

and she will draw the cart to Cosenza for you just like the poor mule. She's an honest ass that earns her barley and straw, that one. We will leave the fagots here, and you can pay me some *soldi* for them when we settle accounts. And the cabbages, with leave of *gnà* 'Nastasia, that good gift of heaven can be disposed among the other things without doing harm to any."

"Blessed be charity to one's neighbor!" responded mastro Zaccardo.

"Certainly the cabbages can ride like so many lords," said his daughter.

The load adjusted, compare Girolamo guided la Muridda, while the others walked beside the cart until they arrived at Cosenza.

There, in the piazza, was an uproar. People from the mountain villages and from the sea-coast mingled with the citizens. The crowd pressed and jostled; hands were thrust in people's faces, to bargain for beasts or for goods. The band played at one side of the square; from the booths venders cried their fruits and trinkets; the fishermen from Paola had rush-

baskets full of fish and polyps; a fortune-teller turned his hand-organ and made his canaries dance; the herdsmen had brought beasts, and the women sold poultry; all those voices were raised in a babel. Mastro Orlando Zaccardo set up his little theatre, driving in poles and nailing up curtains; also his daughter was busy inside the castello of the puppets. Meanwhile, compare Girolamo went about to sell his cabbages, crying :

"Oh, cabbages! Green they are, green. Cabbages, of those good ones. Feel of them, whether they are heavy. They have some weight, my good cabbages; they are not like rags. Solid they are, at every proof."

He let one fall with a thump, to convince the buyers. All those cabbages had their leaves curled, as if with the smile that comes from a good heart.

"Oh, cabbages! Who wants cabbages? Green, I have them green. Ca-a-a-a-a-b-bages!"

Fine and round, they recommended themselves and sold quickly. Then compare Giro-

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lamo went to find the puppet-show of mastro Orlando Zaccardo. Around it was a crowd of people—men, women and children, with some soldiers and non-commissioned officers. The curtains of the castello rose, and the vicissitudes of Pulcinella began. Mastro Orlando himself spoke for Pulcinella and Tartagghia, the famous rivals who paid court to the beautiful Colombina; and moved them, with his arms thrust through their empty clothes. Also Birlicchi and Birlacchi, those ugly devils ready to carry off people, and Pulcinella's bull-dog, leaped and howled by means of mastro Orlando. To Anastasia was entrusted la Colombina, to whom she lent a voice like that of a decoy thrush. Sometimes, if the puppets were too many, Anastasia gave a hand to one or another; she also pulled the wires of Death, that had a wooden body without joints, and said little as it passed, threatening, across the stage.

The crowd was in delight when, from Tartagghia's stick, the blows showered on the head of Pulcinella, wood upon wood, with a fine noise.

"Now you've got it well!" said a sergeant of bersaglieri.

"This time his head is broken, poor fellow," noted the women; while the babies screamed to see such hard blows that felled Pulcinella. Then Colombina ran, felt of the bones of the worthy Pulcinella, passed her hands over his face with the big wooden nose, painted pink, and burst into a great lament:

"Ah, how charming he was, good soul! Another admirer like that I shall not find! How many compliments of sweetmeats and boiled polyps he brought me! He had a heart like the sea, and gave to me with both hands! If he were alive I'd take him for a husband, I'd take him." And Pulcinella, naturally, arose to make Colombina keep her word.

But to compare Girolamo it appeared as if Anastasia had spoken those phrases for him; the blood went to his head. "And who knows that one day I don't seek the tree of the bride?" he said to himself.

At that moment, Anastasia came out from the castello of the puppets. How beautiful

she was, in a black velvet bodice, skirts of pink gauze all spangled, so many necklaces of pinchbeck and glass pearls, rings up to the joint of every finger, and certain shoes of gilded leather that appeared to dance upon the heart of compare Girolamo. "If she doesn't say me nay, true as I live I will find the tree of the bride," he swore within himself.

Anastasia sang, beating the tamburello, dancing a few steps. Her large eyes turned here and there upon the spectators. Then she carried round a tin plate to collect the *soldi;* for one can't trust the public not to disperse without paying—better to receive the money before the performance is ended. Anastasia's face had a smile like that of Colombina, that never changed, as if it had been painted on wood. The sergeant of bersaglieri offered her some cakes, and she accepted them with the air of a prima donna, so that they appeared like a gift of jewels. When she came to compare Girolamo, he, instead of money, put into the dish his mother's wedding-ring, which he wore on his little finger. Anastasia said nothing

but grew red as a tomato, and hid the ring in her palm. Then she ran into the castello. The curtain rose; *tutui, tutui,* sounded the whistle, as Pulcinella and Tartagghia came beating each other with sticks. Pulcinella would have had the worst of it, if his dog had not taken the enemy by the back of the trousers, while the devils carried off Tartagghia, squeaking, and the crowd shouted, "Bravo, Pulcinella!" Otherwise, there were those of the spectators that had taken up small stones, ready to do justice to that rogue of a Tartagghia.

Compare Girolamo remained as if in a dream. The muzzle of la Muridda, stretched out to touch his hand, made him start. "Away, importunate beast!" he said to her.

Anastasia, who had approached, reproved him. "She's hungry, the poor beast, after having dragged the cart, she that usually has not so great a load. See how her ears hang! Go, compare Girolamo, to get her something to eat."

The girl, now in the old plaid gown, stroked the neck of the ass, that looked askance at her.

Protected by Anastasia, la Muridda appeared more sympathetic to compare Girolamo. He went to buy grain, and also a bundle of hay from an old woman that sold it; and while he bargained, he turned to glance at Anastasia. She was feeding the ass with the cakes of the sergeant, while he, at a little distance, with his hat over one ear, made sweet little eyes at her, which she feigned not to see. Those few things that compare Girolamo needed—a match-box, a clasp-knife, some horn buttons —he did not find it easy to buy.

"I don't know where my head is," he complained to himself; "I'm no longer in my own centre. Better for me to stay at home; for in the town, with all the noise, an apoplexy would come to me. Who is born an acorn, let him fall near the oak." And he blamed also the wine that he had drunk, a glass here, and a glass there. "It has betrayed me, that wine. Another time I'll stay on the mountain and sell my cabbages by means of compare Maso the carrier, for now it seems to me as if I had a swarm of bees in my head."

Then he returned to Anastasia, who helped him to feed the donkey, that seemed discontented, as if that girl's caresses did not please her. Mastro Orlando had taken apart the castello, and loaded the cart. "Let us go to eat something," he said to his daughter; "compare Girolamo will do us the favor to come to table with us." They went to an inn that was near, and mastro Orlando had set on the table so many dishes—sausages, and maccheroni, and a fowl, with plenty of fruit and wine—that to compare Girolamo it did not seem real. They talked of what had been earned in the day.

"As for me," said mastro Zaccardo, "I don't complain about the money; what troubles me is the loss of the mule. If you will, I should like to bargain with you for your donkey, compare Girolamo."

"One doesn't sell a person of the family. La Muridda belonged to my father, good soul; indeed, the evening before he died, he made a drink of meal and water for her, as for a sister."

"And do you call her aunt, then?" asked Anastasia, pouring for him a glass of wine.

The mountaineer knew that he made a poor figure before that mocking girl. "Eh, a beast is only a beast," he said, pointlessly. "If I wish to sell her, who hinders me?"

Mastro Zaccardo saw his opportunity. "And how much do you pretend to ask for the donkey, compare Girolamo?

"And how much do you give me?"

"We shall see; what do you want?"

"And what do you give?"

"We haven't the three days of the fair of Castrogiovanni to bargain in; let us come quickly to terms."

"Let us come."

"If I make you a present of thirty *lire* for that donkey, 'tis because I am your friend, and recognize that I am bound to you, compare Girolamo."

"What! thirty *lire* of Egypt! I keep my donkey. That one is strong, with the heart of a lion, as good as a horse to draw or carry a load."

"She can't be a colt any longer. It wasn't yesterday that you had her from your father, peace to his soul!"

The two men went out into the courtyard of the inn, and Anastasia with them. La Muridda, with head bent, stood patiently waiting for her master. They felt her all over with their hands; she had a little swelling on one leg; there was a raw spot on her neck, plastered with tar and nearly healed; but she was neither lame nor broken-winded, and her coat was smooth—a sign of health in a beast. The men bargained, haggling over the price. La Muridda turned her gaze from one to another as if to say, "Buy me or sell me; I change masters, but not my way of life, for an ass always carries wine, and drinks water." Only she rubbed her nose on compare Girolamo's sleeve, as if she bore affection to him. Anastasia took no part in what was done; she leaned against the wall, looking in the air. The strong wine and those dark eyes of the girl made compare Girolamo bold. "Listen, mastro Zaccardo. Since we can't come to terms on

the price, I make you a proposition: I would like to be your son-in-law; and if it does not displease mistress Anastasia, I'll take her, without dowry, in exchange for the donkey. What do you say to that, mastro Zaccardo?"

The father thought of the annoyances which his daughter gave him; she suffered from nerves; was lazy or industrious according to caprice; sometimes she let people make her compliments not too finely sifted; other times she sent her father with his cherry-wood stick to ask reasons from village dandies or from bersaglieri, so that often it was at the risk of his bones. Sometimes she made new dresses for the company of puppets, or she left them ragged; she would now and then stay in bed the whole day, if by chance they had gotten into a good lodging, and leave the work all for her father—Pulcinella, Colombina, Tartagghia, the dogs, Death and the devils. Therefore la Muridda seemed to him better, for the ass would work and neither scold him nor spend his money. The songs and smiles of Anastasia were all for the public; her cavils and

ill humors for her father. Better the donkey! He struck his hand into compare Girolamo's. "Done. I give you my daughter, and take your donkey."

This sobered compare Girolamo all at once. He looked shyly at the girl, who stood smiling with pride, cold and indifferent. Her fine shoulders stood out against the worm-eaten wood of the stall. "Are you content, signora Anastasia?"

"And why not?"

"I will be a good man to you; I shall not let you lack anything, if you do me this honor."

"So many thanks."

She did not blush now, as when she took the ring that had been his mother's. He did not dare to tell her that he loved her, not even when mastro Orlando went into the inn to pay the reckoning, and left them alone. Compare Girolamo did not know what it was that he felt for Anastasia; she was so mocking, that he would have liked to kiss her and to beat her. He loved her, he loved her indeed—but he would have had pleasure in tearing off with his nails

the cold smile that she had on her face. Oh, what was this? It could not be love, like that of his father, who neither kissed nor beat his mother. That beauty of Anastasia was worse than the black wine to make him melancholy.

As they were ready to start, the sergeant of bersaglieri passed by. "Where are you going, my pretty girl?" he asked of Anastasia.

She was silent, but Girolamo replied, "We are going to be married. Have you anything to say against it?"

"I? no;" then the sergeant turned to Anastasia. "But when you are tired of planting cabbages, pretty bride, come to Naples, where our regiment will be, and we will find you a place to sing in a café."

Girolamo's hand clenched his stick, but Anastasia whispered, "Don't mind it, dear Girolamo." That sweet word spared the bones of the bersagliere, who turned and went away, whistling.

"At least until after the wedding, mastro Orlando, you must stay in my house," compare Girolamo invited him.

The next day, Girolamo went in search of the two trees; as he passed through the village, leading la Muridda that was to bring the saplings up the mountain, people asked him, "Oh, compare Girolamo, where is the load of your donkey?" and he replied, "After I shall have talked with Don Giammaria, I shall go for the load." In fact the curate had much to say to him, besides teaching him the duties of the occasion toward the law and toward religion. "You would have done better to take a wife here in the village; *comare* Rosa's Martina, or *massaro* Venerando's Lucia, good girls that are not seen at the window, but, instead, stay at the loom. With this stranger you will have troubles, my son." But compare Girolamo said that he would have Anastasia, he would have her; and he persisted so that Don Giammaria, to change the subject, made him a homily upon matrimony, and let him go.

Compare Girolamo, when he arrived at the thicket of the plain, soon dug up a young pine that wasn't ugly. "Any tree whatever does for me," he said, "but for Anastasia, so beauti-

ful, there would be wanted one with leaves of gold and silver."

At last he found a little larch, slim and straight, that, as the breeze blew, swung its tassels just like the ear-rings of Anastasia. "Here's the tree of the bride!" He dug carefully around it; took it in his arms tenderly as if it had been the bride herself, and put it upon the back of la Muridda. Then he went up the mountain to plant those trees according to the will of Don Giammaria.

The whole village, for curiosity, went to the wedding of compare Girolamo—he that had led the life of a hermit up there on the mountain—with the red-haired girl whom they called "the gipsy." "*Rossa e rissa,*" observed *massaro* Venerando, shaking his forefinger solemnly in his neighbor's face. "True it is, that red hair and quarrels go in company. Compare Girolamo will have his troubles—he will have them."

But everybody knew that Uncle Venerando would have liked to marry his daughter Lucia to compare Girolamo, because, although poor,

the latter came of a respected family. And in Calabria, black hair is common as the black earth, while red hair isn't seen in every piazza. After the wedding, mastro Orlando Zaccardo went away with his puppet-show, and the cart drawn by la Muridda. When Girolamo said good-bye to the black donkey, he would have sworn that the poor beast had tears in her eyes. "For you I sha'n't mix any more drinks of bran and water when your bones are as if broken trotting about the threshing-floor on the sheaves. May you live well, Muridda!"

When Anastasia patted the nose of the donkey, la Muridda suddenly bit the bride's hand as if to say, "'Tis you that have driven me out of the house." Compare Girolamo feigned to examine a wheel, for he would not punish the poor beast that was going away.

At first, mistress Anastasia was content. She had hated the gipsy life, the weary journeys, the scant food, the nights passed under a hedge, the rude words and acts of low people that came to the puppet-show, the repetition of her songs and of the silly speeches

of Colombina. Now she could wander on the mountain all in bloom, gather raspberries, look at herself in the pools among the rocks, lie on beds of moss and dream impossible things. Then as the summer passed, all was no longer new to her; the sun set earlier, and it was no use to light the pitch-splinters in the house, for her husband passed the evenings in sleeping, and she did not know how to spin. The silence weighed on her chest, the melancholy of the black mountain, the path where no one ever came—unless now and then Don Giammaria, who looked after the trees planted by the bridegrooms of his flock, as if that plantation were another parish of his—the wind that blew among the pines, the steep rocks of the Madia, the stupid cabbages of the garden, the pots and pans, and, more than all, that idiot of a Girolamo, she detested them all. Pumpkin-head as her husband was, if he did not stay away all the day at work she at least would have had a living soul to speak to. She would have liked the company of la Muridda; although the donkey had appeared

to have it against her, perhaps because of that bargain, and had brayed at her, as donkeys do when they see a woman with her shoes trodden down at the heel. For, without the public to admire her beauty, Anastasia took no care to be neat; her red hair was rough and her face and gown were dirty. She would not sweep her house; what bread they ate, compare Girolamo bought at the shop of comare Rosa, in the village, who said, "My daughter Martina, I don't say it in order to boast, can make bread of unbolted wheat so that it tastes like fine flour."

And when compare Girolamo had gone out of the shop, the women would say, "That one made a blunder, to take the gipsy."

In the house, the poor fellow had no peace, for his wife scolded and wept, or else maintained a dull silence that was worse. Not to quarrel, Girolamo would go off to the place where were the pine and the larch; and little by little it seemed to him that the graceful larch, with its swinging ornaments, was his bride rather than that loveless woman there in

his house. He did not know how to please Anastasia; everything that he did appeared to annoy her; she had certain affectations, and was disgusted by his manners of a peasant. A sudden fury seized her at the sight of his big thumb crowding the tobacco into his clay pipe; she could not give herself a reason, but so it was. The sound of his jaws when he ate, his grating snores at night, hurt her.

"Perhaps women are all like that," thought compare Girolamo, standing beside the larch that swept his cheek with its tassels. Every morning, before the light was seen on the heights of La Sila, he went to work; besides the charcoal, he was employed at the Vallo for the vintage, and later for the chestnuts. One evening, in order to keep him awake, Anastasia told him the facts of her life, speaking rapidly and with excitement. Certain things that she said made her husband jealous and angry. When she observed that, to tease him still more, she ran to the fir-wood chest, took out the velvet bodice, the pink skirt with spangles, and the gilded shoes, put them on,

and danced as if possessed, beating her tamburello. Compare Girolamo all at once understood how great a blunder he had made, that day at the fair at Cosenza.

"*Amaru iu!* that I brought this puppet into my house. Go, dress yourself like an honest woman, as the wife of my mother's son should be."

"Honest I have been always. But here I'm eating my heart; to live in this house is to be like a dead woman under the stones of the church."

She wept noisily, shaking her bare shoulders. Compare Girolamo pushed her with both hands, so that she fell upon the fir-wood *cassone*. A bruise began to redden upon one of those beautiful shoulders.

The next morning, it seemed that she had forgotten the strife of that evening; and compare Girolamo was ashamed even to ask her pardon for the rude push given to her. They ate, speaking little. When he slung the *bisaccia* on his shoulder, to go to the chestnuts in that dreary November day, with the clouds on

the mountain, and the mists rising from the ploughed fields and from the river-banks down below, it appeared as if Anastasia wanted to say something to him, taking in breath as if to form words. But nothing she said. Then compare Girolamo on the threshold—and afterward he was glad of it—turned and said to her:

"'Nastasia, I leave you with holy peace."

"And I salute you and recommend you to the saints."

When at evening he came home from the chestnuts, not far away, the house had neither fire nor light. The fir-wood *cassone* was open; nothing was missing there except the velvet bodice and the pink skirt with spangles, and the gilded shoes. Anastasia was gone away to lead the gipsy life again.

The next day, when Don Giammaria came up the mountain, riding on his sorrel mule, to look at the trees, he saw compare Girolamo there, who had cut down the larch, the tree of the bride, and now gave it blow after blow with the axe as if for revenge.

"Oh, why will you give it to that tree?

You do wrong to cut wood here, compare Girolamo."

"I know that I do wrong, *reverendo;* but if not, I might do worse. I'm cutting to pieces the tree of the bride, to let off my anger; as I would like to cut to pieces that Anastasia that has tormented me and now has run away."

And he raised his axe again, and hacked the larch: "Take it! and take it!"

"I told you that you were making a blunder, my son. Patience, for in this world we must suffer."

Don Giammaria knew that it was not yet the time for consolation nor for a moral homily. He blessed the poor fellow, turned the mule around and rode down the mountain, while behind him the hard blows of the axe resounded among the rocks, as compare Girolamo cut into splinters the tree of the bride.

A TRUMPET CALL

WHEN the signora went to the house of *comare* Sarina, on the mountain road above Cosenza, to speak about a web of cloth that was to be woven in arabesques, she saw in the opposite dooryard a very stout and florid woman, who sat on the steps of her house with half a dozen children playing around her.

"I see that *vossignoria* is looking at that great piece of a woman like a purple cabbage, —speaking with respect!" observed comare Sarina. "When I see that Rosa there, content as an Easter Day, there comes to me the wish to close the shutters of my window. Many years ago, when we were all girls together, I and the others had to work in order to eat. But Donna Rosina—no, sirs! Anything but work. For her father was Don Ciccu, the apothecary, and they kept her in cotton wool, so that at most she helped him make barley

sugar, or would roll two pills in case of illness at the house of the baron.

"And we others had to toil at home and in the fields, and to bring down the ice and the snow, in the summer, from the ravines up there toward the forest of La Sila. We would plait mats of willow withes, and lay sheepskins over, and heap the ice on these, and cover it with another skin and many green boughs, all bound down with other withes. This we carried on our heads, one getting help from another to place it there, on a folded cloth—your excellency from the city cannot know these things; and we went down the mountain path for miles, with the icy drops that trickled on one's nose or down the back of the neck making one shiver, however heated.

"When we came to the bit of tableland, we would set down our loads to rest, and one would sing the tarantella while others danced. Girls have quicksilver about them.

"Just here was where Donna Rosina came in—she had herself called *donna* because of the leeches and the pills, and the four words

of Latin of her father, Don Ciccu. She could not work—no, she was too delicate; but she could dance like a grasshopper! And *compare* Tonio, that kept the sheep of Don Zeno, the parish priest, as soon as he heard us sing would come around the great boulder that was there, and play on his pipe enough to call the birds from the bushes. And Donna Rosina all jumping for joy, and certain glances!

"Also her mother, Donna Santuzza, made Tonio so many compliments of tobacco and woolen stockings. A-ah! they knew how to bind him round with their coaxings—they knew! And the others of us girls were not so much uglier than Rosa. Even I, that they call *Zi'* Melacotta—I had not always the face of a baked apple, but was in my time red and white like another. But the fact was, they would absolutely have Tonio; and the girls might burst with spite—they would have him. It was comare Barbara who was thought to have put an envy upon them, so that their chickens died and the young ducks could not swim up-stream. *Zia* Petronilla, the white

witch, said as much, and she spoke the verses and signed them with water and salt to take away the evil eye.

"We should have eaten the wedding sugar-plums that June, but there was made the draft for the army, and Tonio drew a bad number; and we all went to the *piazzetta* to see the brave boys go away with fife and drum, and the mammas and the sweethearts that wept with their faces in their aprons. *Pom! pom!*—one felt upon the stomach the thumps of the bass drum, so that it made one melancholy, as the recruits went away down the road.

"Soldiers must go here and there according as the king wills; they toil hard, with little leisure, and Tonio sent few letters. In our town they did not know how to write; then there were not the public schools, and it was enough for one to make his cross on stamped paper in order to take land on *mezzadria*. Now and then came a letter from Tonio to say that he was well, and wished as much to Rosa, to his family, and all friendly persons; that he had begun to learn to read, attending the cor-

poral's lessons; and that, because he had so good lungs and a just ear, the bandmaster had taught him to be one of the trumpeters of his regiment.

"Of these letters Rosa read certain parts—her father had instructed her a little—to the girls at the fountain in the *piazzetta;* other passages, not; and at these she became red as burning embers, for the *scrivano* had known so well how to say all the fine things that Tonio had in his heart.

"But it did not last so. Perhaps Tonio was not content with her letters, for she had them written by her father; and he, good soul, was not a poet, little or at all. And out of sight, out of mind—men are that way. Rosina had no more letters for many weeks. And I, at the fountain, would say to her:

"'Patience, Rosina, he may be ill, or even dead. And then, young men play tricks of all colors; he may easily find himself tired of you; and in the great cities there are so many beautiful girls with silk gowns, finer than the Madonna del Carmine on a feast day. I counsel

you, comare Rosa'—for I would not give her the 'donna,' the little toad—'to give yourself peace about it, and look out for another lover.'

"And one day she let fall her copper jar upon the stones, so that it took a great bruise, and she wept like the fountain itself. 'Sarina,' she said, 'what have I done to you that you tell me these things? My Tonio is an honest lad.'

"Eh, these girls that are kept in cotton wool! I or another, to have been left so by the lover, would have made a wry face, shed perhaps two big tears in secret, and then—good-evening to the music, and found a new lover. For we had to work, *vossignoria*, and the rattling of the loom is good company; and in the fields, the warm earth and the green stalks of the young grain, and the tomtits that wag their little tails between the furrows, and the locusts that sing keep us cheerful; and to go to bed at evening with bones broken from weariness, one sleeps soundly.

"But she sat in the doorway of the drug

shop, looking down the street as if to see far away. And only to speak a word to her she would cry or laugh like one possessed. The doctor did what he could, but, according to me, it was rather a case for the priest to drive out the demon; or else an envy, a witchcraft. And certainly I believe that La Barbara, and I may say also Luciola and Sabedda and Sidora, would willingly have married compare Tonio if he had asked them. Bold and spiteful those girls! For me, I would not have looked at compare Tonio, not even if he had been made of gold!

"Little by little Donna Rosina wasted like a lighted candle. She took off from her neck the heart of filigree silver that Tonio had brought her from the fair at Cosenza, when he went there to sell some sheep; and she hung it, red ribbon and all, on the altar, beside the little silver leg of *mastro* Cola, the cripple, for whom there had been made the grace of a rheumatism that had tormented him for thirty years, and the corals of comare Veronica, whose son came back from sea after four years that he was

believed to be drowned, and so many other fine things to the praise of the blessed Madonna del Carmine, that, as every one knows, can make any ten other Madonnas run away with lifted legs.

"But in vain Rosa made the act of faith of that silver heart. Tonio did not write nor come. Heaven preserve me from speaking ill of the saints! but sometimes, to trust all to them, one loses by it. As for me, if I had been in the clothes of Rosa and cared for Tonio, instead of consuming myself in that manner, I should have gone straight to the king himself and said, 'Do me the favor, majesty; send home my lad, for I don't see the wedding-day, so that it appears to me like a thousand years.'

"However, each one according to his own character. Rosa turned everything upside down: one day she would break dishes, and another stay in bed; and again it would be a great outburst of tears that reduced her like a washed rag; and the next thing she would curse Tonio that an apoplexy might take him,

and then tear her hair because she was losing her baptism by committing in her heart the mortal sin of murder. For Donna Rosina was one who gave herself the airs of a little saint fit to be put under a glass bell, with one hand in the other, that did neither good nor harm. Then a little fever; or she would grow stiff as a stake and seem ready to suffocate, so that various times Don Zeno was called in all haste, in the heart of the night, and came accompanied by the sacristan with the aspersorium in one hand and the great lantern in the other, so that he was obliged to tinkle the little bell with only two fingers. And so, many times Rosa had the blessed oil under false pretenses. For, die to-day and die to-morrow, she still lived and lamented, and would at all costs have her Tonio come back and marry her.

"And she grew whiter and thinner day by day, so that indeed she resembled a wax taper.

"The thing ended in this way: One morning, at the fountain, it was known that at last poor Rosa was really dead. All through the night she had screamed for Tonio, with curses

and with blessings, according as the caprice came to her. By fortune, she had died with holy words in her mouth, so that it might be hoped that her soul was not lost. And we all were ready to give a hand to take her, if possible, the sooner out of purgatory; for indeed it would be less trouble to say the rosary now and then for her than to hear her always talking like a windmill about Tonio that had forsaken her.

"Sometimes she had called him a traitor, a pig; this last was an injustice to the education he had from comare Nunzia, his mother, a Christian who kept her house clean; so particular she was, that the hens might eat from her dish only after she herself had eaten. At other times Rosina called Tonio her handsome soldier, her golden little orange, who knew how to blow the trumpet so that she seemed to hear it far away in Turin, like the voice of his heart. Her talk was too honeyed; and a little of such is a surfeit.

"At the house of Don Ciccu, then, there was great mourning. All the girls went there to-

gether; we tore our hair, and beat on our breasts with our hands, and screamed until we lost breath. In a corner stood the table, with certain mercies of heaven upon it—dried figs, and cakes made with honey and fine flour, and wine, and toasted beans, and some of the barley sugar from the drug shop. And Rosina was dressed as if for a holiday; with a dark green skirt of wool, and an apron of Cosenza stamped leather tied with red ribbons, and a red waist with ever so many gilt buttons, and a black jacket with gold embroidery and fringes, and on her head a yellow silk kerchief. She had heavy gold hoops in her ears, with little hanging balls that did not tinkle any longer, for she lay there white and motionless as a plaster image of a saint before they put a wash of color on it.

"The father, Don Ciccu, stayed in the shop and pounded drugs, from force of habit and because he was confused by grief. It is true that Rosa was but a poor thing, with the heart of a hare, but she was his only daughter, and he loved her from his soul. The mother

crouched in the corner near the hearth, and would eat nothing, not even a raisin; but spoke now and then of her daughter that was like a carnation flower at her window, and a turtle-dove, and many other fine things. And then the other women and the girls would begin to shriek again, as was suitable. And Donna Rosina there in the middle of the room, on a bier held up by carpenter's trestles, and candles lighted at her head and feet—it did not seem real that the others should lament and she be silent. For while she lived she had been of the first force at screaming, for cause or not.

"Then in the street the little bell was heard to ring, and there came in Don Zeno with the sacristan and the sacristan's boy that carried the yellow silk umbrella over the head of the priest. Don Zeno raised his hands and began to mutter Latin that put us all in awe.

"In the fine midst of this, *tra-tiri-tra! tra-tiri-tra!* at the door, which was flung open without compliments, and Tonio enters, with the trumpet at his mouth; for he was come

home on leave of absence, without the shadow of an idea that he was incommoding a funeral.

"But the one who spoiled that funeral was Rosina herself. *Puffete!* She straightened up suddenly, made a leap from the bier, and stood on her feet astounded.

"'It is the angel Gabriel!' she exclaimed. 'The last trump! I am in paradise!'

"For she was firmly persuaded that she was dead. First, she had heard Tonio blow the trumpet—a fine holy Gabriel, indeed, he was! Then she had caught sight of him, and began to comprehend that, according to her way of looking at the thing, it was better than an angel of paradise, for it was her Tonio in flesh and bones. They ran into each other's arms.

"Don Ciccu came in from the shop, all powdered with the rhubarb he was pounding, and embraced Tonio like a son. And the mamma, Donna Santuzza, arose and came out of her hole behind the oven, whimpering this time for joy, while the other women cried, 'Miracle, miracle!'

"It appeared that Rosina was not at all dead,

if one is to believe what the doctors say, who like to discredit sacred things. Don Ciccu explained it to be a crisis that took a good turn from the fear of that trumpet call. At all events, the girl was cured from that moment; there's no denying it.

"They made a great wedding; people were invited to it even from neighboring towns. The young men serenaded the pair, and Rosa scattered sugar-plums from the balcony, and we danced until midnight to the organette, in the *piazzetta* hung with paper lanterns, and rockets went up as if to give a slap to the face of the moon, and squibs were fired so that it appeared like a battle, all in honor of those two. Never has been seen in our town a festival like that. And all because of that turnip-head of a compare Tonio, who would marry a girl that another would not have looked at twice—a puny thing that could do no more than make barley sugar and roll a couple of pills. So it is; in this world one sees certain injustices.

"And look at Donna Rosa now, *vossigno-*

ria! From a reed of the river that she was, she is become a great cabbage of the vegetable garden. And so many troubles of children under her feet! It is a confusion unspeakable in her house; she has no judgment, so that it appears like a pigsty. And her hens always in the middle of the road; and the few rags that she washes hung from the balcony to flap in the face of people. And who knows how compare Tonio's soup is made or his trousers patched? He, poor fellow, carries her, so to say, in the palms of his hands; it is really a pity to see how fond he is of that woman. Never scolds him, says he. Better if she did. Rubbish they are, and will be—that family. And that is why I say that, to see her sit there idle, looking at the sky like a hen before the rain, I would like to clap together the shutters of my window and take her away from before my eyes. My man, on the contrary, can boast that he always finds a dish of hot broth before the embers when he comes home from work, and his clothes are mended to appear new. You can ask him if it is not true, *vossignoria*, and

he will willingly tell you that he has a wife that lets him lack nothing. If not, I'll make him hear reason with the broomstick!"

The signora took advantage of a moment of silence on the part of comare Sarina to explain her wishes in regard to the web of cloth characteristic of that part of the country, and then departed. "Alas!" she thought, while returning in the carriage that had brought her from Cosenza, "even in these remote villages of Calabria, among these honest and simple peasants, are sometimes to be found envy and evil tongues."

PRINCESS HUMMING-BIRD

PRINCESS HUMMING-BIRD

"*La vie chez ces flammes ailées, le colibri, l'oiseaumouche, est si brûlante, si intense, qu'elle brave tous les poisons.*"

MICHELET.

THE heat of the Southern sun, that was the life of the garden with its alleys of lemon and orange trees, its roses and jasmines, fell with a strong glare upon the pink outer walls of a villa a few miles distant from the city of Naples. Only the most discreet rays, however, and these tempered by a system of Venetian blinds and curtains, were allowed to penetrate into the room where the Countess Antonietta G—— was endeavoring to reward with pleasant chat the inconvenience caused to her uncle, the Marquis Onofrio S——, by the sudden and somewhat peremptory invitation which had brought him from Rome to Naples. She was a matron in the redundant beauty of the

autumn of her life—after all, not without its moments which resemble those of the spring-time. The Marquis Onofrio, his patrician head white as silver, wore his sixty years like an order of merit. He was admirably preserved in person; and, morally, had attained to that tolerant cynicism which is the chemical result of disillusions and a genial temper. It would be too much to assert that the Marquis did not regret the necessity of leaving Rome in its most beautiful season, and the pleasures of his club, a pair of horses which he had almost decided to buy, and a new acquaintance who proved amiable under defeat at *tresette*. But the claims of family are not to be disregarded; and the Marquis Onofrio was in duty bound to betake himself to Naples, to witness the civil and religious ceremonies which were to unite in marriage his grandnephew, Count Alfredo, and Miss Emily Colburn, of New York, United States of America.

Curious taste, that of Cristoforo Colombo, who would perforce go to discover another hemisphere without giving himself a thought

how this new, semi-barbaric world was to overturn the traditions of the older society! Yet—let us be just, even to our predecessors—who ever could have predicted a Miss Emily Colburn? "*Insomma*," concluded the silent reflections of the Marquis Onofrio, "we will hear what my excellent niece has to say about the affair."

At that moment she spoke. "Dear uncle," said the Countess Antonietta, "I appreciate the sacrifice that you make in leaving Rome."

The Marquis half closed his eyes, slightly shook his head, and united the tips of the fingers of his two hands, plump and well-kept, like the hands of an elegant ecclesiastic.

"Your political circle, your club, your commodious apartment, your invaluable major-domo, and your game of *tresette*—you have turned your back on them for my sake. How can I repay your goodness?"

"Amuse me with a story, my dear; you formerly could narrate in an enviable manner. What is there of news in Naples?"

"I fear that I may have lost my gift as a

story-teller. Nevertheless, shall I tell you the tale—in strictest confidence, as to a confessor—of the marriage of my son Alfredo, or rather of the events which have preceded the ceremony of to-morrow?"

"I can trust you not to bore me, dear Antonietta; I trained you too well in your youth," said her uncle. "I shall be much interested in what you will tell me."

The Countess was not one of those women who are slaves to a busy idleness; she made no movement toward the basket of satin-lined osier which held her embroidery; but, laying one hand in the other, began her narrative, while the Marquis Onofrio, with a murmured apology, permitted himself a mild cigar.

"To begin, dear uncle, I must assure you that Alfredo is the best of sons, and has caused me no anxieties except by his youthful enthusiasms. A trifle of socialism, which extends even to the dumb creation—he is always reading *Il Zoöfilo*, and has distinguished himself as the champion of overloaded donkeys—a sentiment of universal benevolence, a

nature too impressionable for his own peace; my boy is charming, but sometimes also he fatigues me a little, a very little."

"At twenty years, what would you have?" commented the uncle Onofrio.

"I confess that I have feared to find myself one fine day mother-in-law to some impossible young woman, a peasant from our estates on the Tyrrhene sea-coast, a Russian Nihilist, an English *miss*. When my Alfredo was on board his ship, the ironclad *Lodoiska*, only then I have felt myself quite safe. It is true, there are the sirens in the sea—but one does it better nowadays. If Alfredo were to hear them sing, he would criticise, 'C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas—Wagner!' Oh, he is immensely modern—of his own century, my son! *Ebbene*, to raise the curtain upon our recent domestic drama. You must know, uncle, that when, three months since, the *Lodoiska* came into port, her commander had the unlucky inspiration to give a fête on board. Naturally, when all the people, possible and impossible, of Neapolitan high life were in-

vited, we were not omitted. I accepted the invitation, if only to see the enjoyment of my son and of the son of my sister, De Alvares, who is here at Naples for his studies of law. You have seen too many fêtes, *zio;* I leave you to imagine the music, the colored lanterns, the flowers, the electric lights, the flags, the pretty women and their cavaliers, official and civilian, and the unforeseen tableaux when the rockets exploded. But what you cannot imagine without the help of my description, aided by this photograph—which, after all, merely maligns her in black and white—is the extreme beauty of a young girl who was one of the guests. She was of a rare type; one recognized her as American—more precisely, from New York. She was very slender, with delicious unaccented curves of shoulder and waist; her movements were supple and swift as the leap of a flame. Her complexion was of most delicate pallor, with a pink color that came and went upon the cheeks. Her large eyes were blue, brilliant as sapphires; her hair was light *cendré*, with reflections of her father's

presumable gold mines. Her hands and feet were microscopic; her diamonds exaggerated, monumental, colossal. Her dress—I will not fall into details—was a skirt of marine-blue velvet, purposely of the greatest simplicity of design, with a barbaric bodice made entirely of the plumage of humming-birds. She seemed a living rainbow; she flashed around her lights of ruby, sapphire, amethyst, beryl, emerald, and opal.

"If I was dazzled by her as she went by in a waltz, upon the arm of Alfredo, judge what happened to my son! As soon as my optic nerve recovered itself from the shock of that resplendent bodice, I instantly began to instruct myself in the art of being a mother-in-law. The great victories and defeats of a woman's life are apt to take place in a ballroom. I surrendered at discretion to destiny. Soon I perceived some one bowing before me. It was the American consul. After the first conventional phrases were exchanged, I asked him, 'Pray tell me who is that beautiful compatriot of yours, dancing with my son?' He reas-

sured me; I forgave him the fine smile that recognized my maternal anxieties.

"'Signora,' he said, 'that is Miss Emily Colburn, of New York; a most charming girl in the full extent of the term; accomplished, of delightful antecedents. She is at present traveling in Europe under care of her relative, Dr. Colburn.' After that I gave myself no more trouble. What is gained in a conflict with destiny? Also, these Americans are of whatever rank one wishes to believe them. So I accepted the arm of a German baron—I spare you the consonants of his illustrious name—and made a little promenade. Everywhere we met my son with the beautiful American. Fernan de Alvares, standing alone near a gangway, whispered as I passed, 'Aunt, we must take care of Alfredo.' Finally my grand German left me seated near some persons not of my acquaintance; and one of these, at my side, was a woman of perhaps fifty years of age, who wore a black silk gown of excellent quality, but so ill-fitting that one understood that she must be a person not only eminent in

respectability but also in erudition. She was either English or American, I decided, uncertain between the two nationalities. I addressed a few words to her in Italian, to which she replied with sufficient accuracy of grammar, but with an extraordinary accent and literal rendering of the English idiom. Knowing a little of her language, I resolved to sacrifice myself. A sufficient reward was the relief of that good woman. In a little while came my son with the inevitable Miss Emily Colburn. I could remember her name, for with her quick movements and her bodice of feathers of humming-birds she herself seemed like a *colibri*.

"'Oh, mamma,' says my Alfredo, 'I was searching for you, in order to present Dr. Colburn—this is her niece, Miss Emily Colburn—and I find you already acquainted.'

"I looked about me to salute the *signor dottore*, and beheld the woman with the black silk dress smiling and bowing as she said, 'I suppose I ought to have named myself before—Dr. Anastasia Colburn, of Boston; and this is my young relative from New York.' Then the

little Colburn plumed herself and turned her pretty head toward her aunt and then to me, with all her feathers sparkling under the electric light; and my Alfredo appeared immersed in contentment.

"'Oh me!' I said to myself; 'mother-in-law to an aviary, and heaven knows what relation to a feminine medical diploma!' I tried to consider myself a false augur, to smile in my own face, and to discredit my own predictions. Ah, they are realized, all of them; and I assure you, dear uncle, I ask nothing better. The admirable Miss Anastasia and I became friends. I stipulated not to be obliged to call her doctor. At all costs, I reasoned, we must be amiable. If later I have to interfere in this affair of Alfredo's, better to do so from the position of a friend to these American ladies, and of an affectionate mother to my boy."

"You were right, *mia cara*," said the Marquis Onofrio. "It is a virtue of diplomacy to avoid needless differences."

"Yes. I invited the ladies to my Thursday evenings, resolved that Alfredo should not

have the spur of opposition to his love. But it was not easy to pacify my nephew Fernan. He has doubled the dose of aristocratic prejudice in being the son of a Spanish nobleman, and he nearly quarreled with me because I would not interfere, separate Alfredo from the blond American, and command him, under penalty of my extreme displeasure, to marry the Contessina Sofia, with whose mamma I had already exchanged certain preliminary phrases. Fernan, as I have just said, was ready to quarrel with me; and Alfredo, on his part, complained that his cousin's manner toward him was altered. Meanwhile we saw the American ladies very often. They drove with me in the Via Roma and in the country, where Emily declared that she 'simply adored those delicious pink villas that seemed modeled in strawberry ice.' The young men rode beside the carriage; and Emily, who is immensely intelligent, used a thousand little arts of coquetry to please Fernan de Alvares, whom she had at once recognized as her adversary. Alfredo was not unhappy on this account, for Emily

gave him such glances that to be discontented would have proved him a monster of ingratitude. Miss Anastasia was much interested in the excavations at Pompeii; she smuggled off, in the depth of the pocket of her gown, certain little antiquities, and later threw them away, saying that her conscience would not allow her to keep them.

"One day the blow fell. I do not know how the classic Damocles felt in the case of the suspended sword; for my part, I prefer certainties. But to return to modern history. My Alfredo came to me with the confession that he had spoken such words to Miss Emily that nothing remained but for me to seek Dr. Colburn and formally ask the hand of her niece for my son. I could not refuse; really, I had no arguments except those that had not availed when the affair consisted of six dances and a spray of gardenia. I went, saw, and was conquered when that woman from Boston calmly said she did not know how Emily felt about it —she left all those things to her niece. Emily could take care of herself, and whenever she

had been engaged to a young man it was her own choice, and when she broke the engagement she probably had her reasons, Miss Anastasia told me."

"Just heavens!" exclaimed the Marquis Onofrio.

"I remained petrified," continued his niece; "but at that moment Emily and Alfredo entered, having met in the street—Emily walked to the side of her aunt, kissed her mechanically, and informed her that she was engaged to the Count Alfredo. It was my son whose eyelids dropped to meet his blushes.

"'Well,' said the extraordinary Miss Anastasia, 'I'm glad this is all settled, my dear, for now I can go right away to Berlin to hear the anatomical lectures, and leave you here in the *pension*. The landlady seems like a nice, kind person; and now that you have a young gentleman to escort you around, you will not miss me, I guess.'"

"*Perdiana!*" shuddered the Marquis Onofrio; "I am indebted to you for a new sensation, niece."

"Oh, I believe it!" returned the Countess. "Even Miss Emily had the good taste to appear surprised. My poor Alfredo turned upon me a despairing glance, which it would have been cruel to disregard.

"'Dear madam,' said I, 'if really you must leave Naples, at least let me take my future daughter-in-law to my home.' I assure you, Uncle Onofrio, I experienced in anticipation all the fatigues of chaperoning an American girl; but what sacrifices will not a mother make for her only son! And then, Dr. Colburn's festal toilette of the same eternal black silk had become such a weariness to me that the prospect of its removal to Berlin infused in me new courage. Briefly, then, the aunt departed, and the niece and six trunks, each of the half-dozen nearly as large as the ironclad *Lodoiska*, were at my villa. Of course the young men were lodging at Naples—Alfredo upon his ship, Fernan at the house of his professor—but they visited the villa daily. When alone with me, the little Emily proved herself all that I could wish. Of course I inquired most

delicately into those broken engagements of which Dr. Colburn had spoken, and Emily explained everything, which, after all, was little or nothing. Mere diversions and compliments of children—the parents not at all concerned in the matter—a little kiss or two with the surface of the lips, and an incredible amount of bonbons and cotillon favors. At all events, *zio*, I remained in love with my little daughter-in-law of the future. In the quiet hours when we read, or embroidered, or walked in the garden, Emily wore costumes of the most expensive simplicity, of ostensible batiste or muslin, but covered with fine Valenciennes laces."

"Oh, I pardon you the list of her wardrobe," interrupted the Marquis Onofrio.

"She possessed not only the famous bodice, but also a mantle, a fan, a bonnet, a toque, of humming-bird feathers, and never failed to put on one or more of these brilliant articles whenever the young men were expected. One day I heard Alfredo remonstrate with her, as they walked along a path shaded by lemon-trees, while Fernan and I sat near upon a garden-seat.

"'*Carina*,' said my son, 'these feathers do not at all please me. I wish, *Emiliuccia mia*, that you would not wear them any more. It seems to me a barbarous and cruel adornment. They were once living birds, bright and happy as you are; each little feather used to quiver and shine with delight as the pretty creatures darted through the American forests, under great pendent flowers, bells of which the music was perfume. Now they are dead I cannot see you wear the poor little victims, Emily."

"She smiled enchantingly. 'I didn't kill them, Alfredo.'

"'Yes—but—'

"'No, you need not say one word about it, for I want so much to wear my birds. I'm tremendously fond of humming-birds. Do you know, they call me *La Colibri* at the club—Cousin Fernan said so.'

"'Reason the more,' murmured Alfredo, displeased.

"'And they all came from a forest that belongs to my papa, in South America,' continued Emily, with great cheerfulness. 'The

girls at home have nothing like it. Look at these feathers, and these little blue and green ones; this tiny tuft is from the head of a sort of humming-bird that, they say, builds its nest in the upas-trees of the Antilles, and of course that must be awfully dangerous for the hunters. Papa had all these birds killed on purpose for me. Wasn't he kind? They are killed with air-guns, I believe. It doesn't hurt them; at any rate, they don't mind it now.'

"My Alfredo looked very serious. 'Emily,' said he, 'it is a pain to me to have you associated with an act of cruelty; I forbid—' The expression of her face ought to have warned the foolish boy; but to make quite safe, I screamed and declared I had seen a snake. This brought Alfredo in a moment to my side, so that I could whisper to him, 'Hush—if really you would be unhappy without her. She is capable of breaking the engagement. After marriage you can forbid this *bizarre* caprice of hers.' Meanwhile that coquette had appealed to Cousin Fernan, as she called him; and he, as if to increase the dissension between

the lovers, had declared the *parure* of feathers to be most distinguished and becoming."

"Oh, I warrant you!" said the Marquis Onofrio. "No woman wishes to emulate the feat of Paganini, and play her variations upon a single string. She must have two, at least, to her bow. *Femmine, femmine!*"

"We soon reëntered the house," continued the Countess Antonietta. "A new thought assailed my mind: did my nephew wish, merely from family pride, to prevent Alfredo's marriage with Emily; or, on the contrary, could he possibly be so disloyal to his cousin as to wish to become a rival? I immediately forced myself to acquit him, and to dismiss so unworthy a suspicion. But when a woman once begins to distrust, she stops short of nothing less than the worst; and I could not cease to think of Fernan de Alvares, as he had stood at the side of Emily, turning in his hands the gleaming toque, which she had removed from her head to display its curious little tufts of feathers. Strangely enough, I found that I already began to desire the marriage proposed

—that the incident which two weeks earlier would have delighted me with a prospect of change in the relations between my son and Miss Emily now gave me genuine discomfort. Fernan, observing my uneasiness without perhaps divining its cause, devoted himself to the duty of attendance on his aunt, even to the neglect of the young lady; while, indeed, it was not long before Alfredo and Emily were again on the best terms.

"The superabundant life of Naples delighted my little guest; she would go here and there, and I developed a conscientiousness worthy of the respectable Anastasia in allowing no opportunity to pass unimproved. Dances, garden-parties, with the British lawn-tennis, excursions by land and by water—my muscular system resents even the memory of them. At thirty-nine years and twelve months, uncle, one can hear music without wishing to dance. Finally we betook ourselves one morning to the Santa Lucia district."

"Ah, that is a quarter of the city that I have never visited," said the Marquis Onofrio. "I

find that it is less easy for me to adhere to my democratic principles when it is a question of breathing the odors of the fish of yesterday and the steam of the cabbages of to-day. Your description, Antonietta *mia*, will convert those prosaic fumes into the breath of roses."

"Let us hope so. We climbed more than one of those steep streets where the houses, of all shapes and sizes, stand at irregular angles wherever they find a foothold upon the volcanic hillside. Those houses, without air or light, seem to me uninhabitable; I cannot wonder that the people live on the door-steps. There, in the street, the women sew, cook, complete their toilettes, tend their babies; the men hammer metal, work at the carpenter's bench, mend nets; the children play, sleep, or quarrel over melon rinds and refuse tomatoes. Above the general noise rise the voices of dealers in fish or fruit, and of the *acquaiuole* who scream the praises of their lemonade or mineral waters. The fishermen came, with sails bending to a light breeze, and drew their boats up to the *molo*. They assumed magnif-

icent poses as they dragged the nets out of the boats. With their red Phrygian caps, bare sunburnt throats and arms, garments of various colors tempered by the salt water, they formed fine groups as they shook out and sorted the contents of their teeming nets. The fish, a twisting, palpitating, iridescent mass of rose-color and dark blue and silver, tangled with sea-weeds, rivaled the brilliancy of Emily's humming-birds. I could see that these marine splendors inspired her with some new ideal of a costume; the imagination of this young girl naturally translated itself into a toilette, as that of a sculptor into a statue, or of a poet into verse. And I acknowledge, for my part, a debt of gratitude to her on the occasion of our visit to the Santa Lucia quarter, for her celestial beauty and her exquisite dress. In the midst of all the squalor and confusion, she might have been the siren Parthenope come to revisit her ancient realm. Imagine, Uncle Onofrio, the slender, lithe figure in a tight-fitting gown of greenish-gray cloth—color of the sea in a cloudy day—with panels and revers of

white, embroidered with a design of sea-mosses executed in silver thread, edged with a narrow passementerie of Venetian shells strung also on silver threads. Her bonnet, of the inseparable humming-birds, was a little discordant with her toilette of a sea-nymph, yet one might fancy that the birds had drifted out with the land-breeze and rested upon the gold-dusted head of the siren, believing it to be some floating flower of the tropics."

"Niece," said the Marquis, "I forgive you your lyric rhapsody upon a Parisian fashion-plate."

"As we approached the little inn where we were to take a characteristic breakfast," continued the Countess, "piteous moans and cries were heard, and we saw before us a little boy of perhaps eight years old crawling, dragging himself painfully across the street. Emily flew from my side, and, regardless of her costly dress, was on her knees to assist the child. Also Alfredo ran to help him. '*Cos' hai, poverino?*' asked Emily; and the answer, in Neapolitan dialect, was interpreted by my son.

The child said that in trying to defend his little brother from some larger boys they had struck him with a bar of iron snatched from a blacksmith's bench, and broken his leg; the little brother had run to call the mamma. 'And meanwhile I die,' said the boy, looking piteously up to the tearful eyes of Emily. Alfredo sought in vain for an idea that might be of use. Fernan de Alvares observed, 'Pardon me, aunt; your dress remains in peril of that basket of fish;' and then, to the child, 'Let us understand each other, my boy; it is a pity to cause tears to this young lady. For my part, liking to see her smile, I would give a *lira*, a whole *lira*, to whoever would dance for her a good tarantella.' 'You are cruel, Cousin Fernan,' protested Emily. 'I am clairvoyant, an inspired bone-setter,' rejoined Fernan, laughing. The little martyr gave him a telegraphic glance of intelligence, broke into a delicious laugh that displayed thirty-two white teeth, sat upright, whistled between his fingers, and finally sprang to his feet. Immediately his younger brother—there really was that broth-

er—came running around a corner; the elder caught up a tambourine from somewhere, and the two began a tarantella that repaid looking at. The fiction of the bad boys, the iron bar, the defence of the little brother, was pardonable for the sake of that superbly veracious dance. 'My poor Alfredo,' thought I; 'always at a disadvantage because you have the misfortune to be serious. Your sympathy with Emily's passing mood of tender pity avails you nothing. Fernan knows how to make her laugh!'"

"I have observed," assented the Marquis Onofrio, "that with many American women the romantic, melancholy lover is little appreciated. If Ophelia had been American she would have been enamored of the happy memory of Yorick, the fellow of infinite jest, and cared little for the fine eyes of Prince Hamlet. These young ladies must be amused at all costs, and find a serious devotion a trifle uncomfortable. I do not say this of all Americans—my experience is by no means universal," finished Uncle Onofrio, modestly.

"Alfredo saw his error," pursued the Countess, "and finally retrieved it, thanks to an opportune guitar, and his charming tenor voice. He sang, to his own accompaniment, some popular songs. Men and women gathered under the window of the inn, and Alfredo dispensed to the crowd tumblers of sour wine with the grace of a Ganymede out of a situation! After that, Fernan might devote himself to his aunt, *ecco!* Not to weary you, *caro zio*, the days passed in a thousand diversions, and the little Emily, quick to seize new ideas, conformed herself more and more to my suggestions. She proved herself docile, affectionate, generous—"

"Ouf! Another catalogue? I take her virtues for granted. I prefer to hear about her caprices," said the Marquis, with ingratitude.

"It would be a catalogue indeed to give points to that of a museum," returned his niece. "For example, she was immutably tenacious of her humming-birds, except upon one occasion when she appeared dressed in a costume of gray velvet, with facings of rose-colored moiré, and bordered with the breasts of white

doves. 'Were you Venus herself,' cried Alfredo, 'you should not wear that murderous trophy!' I expected from the fair American a formal declaration of independence, a Fourth of July of the toilette, or at least a crisis of nerves. I laid my hand on the stopper of my bottle of *acqua di Felsina*. Nothing of the sort; merely the cheerful reply: 'Why, certainly! I will go right away and change my dress, if you say so. You are horridly particular, Alfredo *mio;* but this gown *is* rather heavy, and I would really rather wear something else.' Fernan shrugged his shoulders as she left the room. I no longer comprehended the attitude of my nephew. He had ceased to remonstrate with Alfredo or with me against the proposed marriage with a young girl who would bring no new patent of nobility into the family. After a final bitter phrase or two, pardonable to his pride of a noble of Madrid and of Naples, he appeared to give himself peace, and to share the diversions of Alfredo and Emily.

"Meanwhile, to my affright, Emily seemed far from well. She was pale and languid; the

bodice of humming-bird plumes had to be made smaller to suit her fragile waist. 'And it was made only four weeks ago for the ball on board the *Lodoiska*,' she would complain. At first I attributed her indisposition to the excitement of her betrothal to Alfredo, and the fatigues consequent upon the fêtes and theatres which we attended. Yet Emily had triumphantly enjoyed every gayety of two seasons in New York society. It was not likely that Naples would overtax her brilliant vitality. I suggested remaining at home from various festivities; and day after day the poor little girl preferred to rest in a great arm-chair in my room, while Alfredo read aloud to us. I was charmed to see how the domestic virtues blossomed in the character of my son. Do not smile, Uncle Onofrio—you, an impenitent bachelor, have had no occasion to practise them—but it was a pleasure to me, I assure you, to see that Alfredo would know how to take care of this delicate little woman. Also Fernan was solicitous in his attentions to her. He had been fortunate in his choice of bonbons for her acceptance; and now

he came to my aid, for when I tried in vain to induce the child to eat as much as would have satisfied one of the humming-birds, her prototypes, Fernan would produce a satin bonbonnière—always of new and fanciful shape—and tell 'Cousin Emily' half of an amusing story, the sequel contingent on her taking a few chocolates. 'Fernan is awfully kind to me,' she said. And poor Alfredo, distracted with anxiety for his little love, no longer seemed capable of amusing her; he was absorbed in melancholy, and dark circles around his eyes—*ink-saucers*, our good Neapolitans call them—attested sleepless nights. The controversy regarding the humming-bird plumage was given up, although Emily wore them constantly, encouraged by the praise of Fernan and the silence of Alfredo. Meanwhile her condition became worse and worse, and I began to think of disturbing Dr. Anastasia Colburn at her studies in Berlin. The most eminent physicians in Naples had been consulted; and one of them, an Englishman, told me plainly that everything indicated a case of poisoning by

means of minute, often-repeated doses of arsenic. 'It is absurd to ask you, signora,' said he, 'if the young lady can have an enemy capable of wishing her death? So beautiful a rival has, no doubt, awakened much envy among the Neapolitan *signorine;* but these rosebuds use no weapons deadlier than their thorny little tongues. It can only be some undetermined disease of malarial origin.'"

"Oh, I recognize him there!" cried the Marquis Onofrio; "a little more, and he would have given the blame to Roman fever, caught in passing by in a railroad train. If an Englishman or an American has toothache, gout, a sprained ankle even, the Roman fever is the cause of it. And if they suffer sometimes from malaria, is it the fault of Rome? To walk on the shady side of the street, challenge the night dews and Heaven knows what currents of air, retain their Anglo-Saxon modes of life—it is like ringing the door-bell of Fever, and then complaining that they find her at home!"

The Countess Antonietta nodded assent to this little tirade, and resumed her story. "Day

by day my poor little Emily faded visibly. Her pallid face, where her great eyes had already assumed the dim lustre of the eyes of a dying bird, the faded rose of her lips, her little hands, pearly, semi-transparent—the contrast with her former self, full of delicate, vivid energy, was too sad. The shadow of her constantly increasing illness had fallen upon the household. My poor Alfredo struggled bravely to keep above the waves of his trouble, that at least he might sustain to the last his little Emily. I was deeply afflicted, and weighed down with the responsibility of this precious life, that seemed fast slipping away from us. Fernan was reserved in his grief, and unremitting in his attentions to us all.

"One day Alfredo came to me with a white face and an expression in his eyes that I had never before seen there. The three young people had been in the garden, my maid in attendance on Emily, and from my window I had admired the group, Emily like a fairy princess in her brilliant mantle of plumage, as she rested upon the skins of some wolves that Alfredo once

on a time shot in Hungary; the young men were arranging bouquets under her capricious direction, and Marianna solemnly knitting at a little distance. Then Fernan had ridden away to visit a neighbor—the mamma of the Contessina Sofia already mentioned; soon afterward, Emily had become exhausted, and Marianna had brought her into the house. And my poor Alfredo came to seek comfort from his mother. I watched him with some anxiety as he sat beside me in restless silence. Suddenly he broke forth with excited words:

"'I shall have to kill Fernan; I hate myself for the evil thought.'

"'No, no, *caro*,' said I; 'you are not yourself when you say that. Perhaps he cannot help loving Emily. She is a trifle coquettish, for all she is so good and sweet; and more probably he feels for her only the affection of a future cousin.'

"'Affection!' repeated my son, with a wild look; 'if it were only that—if Fernan loved her, and she him—if, I say, she loved him—I would give her up to him, and then—blow out

my brains. I would have her happy, at all costs—except that of my living to see her his wife. But, mamma, it is worse than that. Fernan is poisoning my Emily with his accursed bonbons!'

"'Oh, be silent!' I cried—'my sister's son! your cousin Fernan!'

"'Yes, your sister's son. Think of Aunt Rafaella's pride of rank, that led her to marry Don Ramon de Alvares. Has she been happy with him? Has he not been a stern, unkind husband to her? Who knows what cruel nature Fernan may have inherited?'

"'Don Ramon is not amiable,' I answered, trying to soothe him, 'but he is incapable of crime, or even an action unbecoming an honest man. And I hope that Fernan has no worse inheritance than an overdose of aristocratic prejudice.'

"'He told me at the beginning,' insisted Alfredo, 'that he should do all in his power to prevent my marriage with Emily. He is a poisoner! No, no, it is not true—Fernan, that is like a brother to me! Mamma, oh, mamma,

forget what I said! I think I am crazy.' My poor Alfredo dropped his head upon his knees, burying his face in my draperies. I was about to ring for Marianna to bring a cup of tea of mallow leaves for Count Alfredo, when was heard the voice of Fernan, returned from his ride, in the courtyard below as he gave his horse in charge to a groom.

"'Fernan! Fernan!' cried Alfredo, starting to his feet, 'come here; let me embrace you.'

"'Hush!' said I; 'do not call your cousin. What reason would you give for this great rush of tenderness? What would he imagine?'

"'You are right, mamma,' answered my son, with a tense voice; 'there is probably no reason that I should love Fernan more or less than usual.'

"Then Emily's slow step, in pathetic contrast to the gay tinkle of her beads and bangles, was heard in the corridor. Alfredo subdued his passion with an instantaneous change, surprising even in a man of southern Italy, and hastened to meet his little love.

"So, day by day, our sad little drama played itself. I confess, uncle Onofrio, that I admired the self-command of my son. No change in the relations between him and his cousin was perceptible, even to me who knew the affair from the interior. Only once, when Fernan was coaxing Emily to accept his bonbons, Alfredo said quietly, 'I think she does not care for any at the moment.' Immediately the capricious Emily declared she would have a *marron glaé*, and then decided to toss it to my little dog. Alfredo watched the animal play with the bonbon and begin to eat it. 'Will it hurt him?' asked Emily; and my son, looking straight at Fernan de Alvares, answered lightly enough, 'Oh no, one bonbon will not finish him.' A few moments later Alfredo, as if to make reparation, clasped the hand of his cousin, apropos of little or nothing. Fernan appeared to remark neither coldness nor fervor.

"At last I became desperate. I wrote to Miss Anastasia Colburn, begging her to leave her anatomical lectures and come straight to Naples, to use every resource of her knowl-

edge to save the life of her niece and the happiness, perhaps even the reason, of my son. She came without delay. It is certain that there were tears behind her eye-glasses when I met her at the railway station; and if one could be sure of the curious American intonations, I should say that her voice quivered and nearly broke more than once as, during the drive to my house, we spoke of poor little Emily. But at the side of the invalid she was all the *dottoressa*. Emily, in those days, more than ever attached to her humming-birds, wore the mantle of feathers over whatever costume. She said that she felt chilly, and nothing was so warm as those soft plumes. Alfredo had ceased to pity the quenched existence of the birds, while a life like theirs, brilliant, volatile, innocent, was being destroyed by an unknown force as viewless as the shafts of the air-gun that had been their death.

"Miss Anastasia entered the room where Emily sat by a window with Alfredo at her side. Fernan, near a low table, was busy in arranging a bouquet of white roses. Marianna,

in the anteroom, knitted industriously. Miss Anastasia spoke: 'My much-esteemed-and-by-no-means-to-be-contradicted colleague was right' (the woman had added some curious German constructions to her idiom of the United States); 'arsenic poison is indicated.' Emily screamed; Alfredo started to his feet, rushed at his cousin Fernan, and finished by handing to him the ball of thread for tying the roses, which was fallen to the floor. 'And the poisoner is right here,' continued Miss Anastasia. I dreaded to hear her next words. 'It is that ridiculous mantle and bodice and hat, and all made of poor little corpses embalmed with arsenic. Take off the mantle this minute, and let the maid take it and burn it up, Emily. I always thought those birds were a piece of folly and wickedness, but it was no use to say much, for Emily always has had her own way. I'm a consistent member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and I hate to see a woman wear stuffed birds. And an impalpable pulverization of arsenic is not good to breathe. I shall exhibit the proper reme-

dies; and oh, my little Emily, you will get well again for poor old aunty, won't you?' finished the good Anastasia, with a gush of womanly tears that seemed capable of making blossom the arid parchment of her medical diploma.

"There was a moment of emotional silence. My Alfredo, with one hand clasping the fingers of his little love, took with the other the capable hand of Miss Anastasia. Then the *dottoressa* recovered her professional self. 'Just like a man!' she exclaimed. 'Why couldn't that English quack (no longer her much-esteemed, etc.) see what the trouble was, and do something? I may as well say it as think it—there are enough physicians expert in diagnosis, but when it comes to special therapeutics, my little Emily, there's nobody better than your old aunty.'

"Miss Anastasia took off her eye-glasses and wiped them vindictively. Then she turned to Alfredo. 'I am surprised at you, young man, for agitating the patient.' My poor boy had in his eyes two great tears which were not

permitted to fall. 'I see no reason to worry,' declared the good Anastasia. 'My niece will soon be as bright and well as ever; and I guess the experience will have taught her not to be so set on her own way. I know you have felt with me, Alfredo, about these poor little birds, and I like you for it. If Emily had any judgment she would have seen that you were right and she was wrong.'

"'As you always are,' said Emily, equivocally; but Alfredo kissed her hand in good faith.

"'You will have to tutor her a little,' remarked Miss Anastasia. Then she gave a benevolent glance above her eye-glasses, comprehending in it Fernan and myself.

"'Yes, she will do well now, no fear,' pronounced this light of the profession, this Minerva Medica of Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America.

"I looked at Fernan de Alvares. His solemn Spanish eyes were brilliant with unselfish rapture. My Alfredo caught sight of those eyes; leaving Emily, he ran to embrace Fernan. 'My cousin, my brother,' he said, 'I

thank you a thousand times for sharing in my happiness.'

"Our troubles were ended. In the course of a few days the treatment of Miss Anastasia had visibly benefited her niece; and the bodies of the humming-birds, solemnly cremated by Marianna, went, we may hope, to meet their tiny ghosts in an Elysium of flowers and flight. You may imagine, Uncle Onofrio, whether we, especially Alfredo, were lavish in joyous attentions to Emily. But would you credit it? I had a thirteenth task of Hercules to prevent my absurd son from confessing to Fernan de Alvares his sinister and morbid suspicions! 'A fine compliment, truly, to your cousin,' said I. 'How would you phrase it? For instance, "I thought you capable of murdering, for motives of family pride, the young girl who is to be my wife," or, better, "I believed you a Borgia, and you are the friend of my soul!" Oh, I assure you, your cousin will hardly feel grateful to you for such extreme frankness!'"

"Who excuses, accuses himself," remarked the Marquis Onofrio.

"Finally my son let himself be persuaded—ah, uncle, I hear carriage-wheels; the young people, with Miss Anastasia, have been driving. You shall see now for yourself how happy my son is."

Gay voices sounded upon the staircase. The door opened, and the spirit of the brilliant, laughing Neapolitan springtime seemed to enter the discreet, artificial shadow of the room where sat the Marquis Onofrio and the Countess Antonietta. The beauty of Emily quite dazzled the elderly man of the world—he that had appraised the charms of the fair women of half a century of society. Emily, conscious but not at all disconcerted, stood like a bird just alighted, all sparkle and vibrating grace.

"I kiss the hand of her Highness, the Princess Humming-bird," said the gallant old Marquis, bowing over the little fingers. He was also presented to Miss Anastasia Colburn, to whom he addressed amiable compliments.

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, sir," said she, with much precision.

"Where is Fernan, that he did not return with you?" asked the Countess Antonietta.

"Oh, he met the Contessina Sofia and her mamma!" answered Emily, with her soft, tinkling laugh.

"I understand," said the Countess to herself. "I shall soon be invited to complete, on behalf of Fernan de Alvares, those phrases which I began to speak for my son to the mamma of Sofia—the phrases interrupted by the appearance of Princess Humming-bird!"

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